BRITISH MAIL-COACH SERVICES 1784-1850

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CONTAINS PULLOUTS

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The use by the Post Office of riders and carts for mail conveyance on main post routes was by c1770 proving deficient as a means of distributing intelligence for an economy about to undergo sustained and rapid economic development. The appearance of fast light stage-coaches on certain roads at this time however, provided the inspiration for John Palmer to advance his plan for a system of mail-coaches. Despite opposition, Palmer had in a period of less than two years established a network of mail-coach services which provided an economical and safe means of mail transit coupled with a premier form of public passenger conveyance. The speed and expansion of routes and facilities resulted initially in a rapid increase in the volume of letters, but this declined as postage rates increased to assist war finances, and from 1812 stagnation set in.

The number of mail-coaches was never large and at the height of the system in the mid 1830s only 300 vehicles were used in Great Britain and another 75 in Ireland, but their success stimulated coaching in general. By the mid 1830s mail-coaching produced demand factors in the economy amounting to about £700,000 per annum in Great Britain and £120,000 in Ireland of which the agricultural sector received 70% of the benefit. Mail-coaches represented 9.5% of the public long-distance coaching traffic at this period. The development of the railway network saw a rapid collapse of mail-coaching on the lines out of London from the late 1830s. Rail transit of mail increased costs at a time when revenue was reduced by the adoption in 1840 of uniform penny postage. Increased speed of transit, improved frequency of delivery and low rates of postage provided however an inestimable benefit to a society in the throes of an accelerating industrialisation which was to bring Britain to the pinnacle of economic power and world dominance in the late nineteenth century.

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Guildhall Library, City of London
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Abbreviations used

BC	Bruce Castle (Borough of Haringey Libraries)
BM	British Museum
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
BRL	Bath Reference Library (County of Avon Libraries)
Bod	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Cal SP(Dom)	Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)
Cal Tr Papers	Calendar of Treasury Papers
EHR	Economic History Review
HC	House of Commons
JHC	Journal of the House of Commons
KAO	Kent Archives Office, Maidstone
POR	Post Office Records
PRO	Public Record Office

"A safe and quick method is found to convey,
Our bills of exchange, and I promise to pay:
Political news from all parts of the town,
The Senate, the Play, and each place of renown.
New pamphlets, and schemes, or the prices of stocks,
That trafficks in ports, and escaped from the rocks.
At Bristol Hotwells or the New Room at Bath
Arrived Mr Fancy and Lady Hogarth...
The merchant, the lover, the friend and the sage,
Will daily applaud Mr Palmer's new stage."

Bath Chronicle 5 Aug 1784

Chapter 1 - The Role of the Post Office in Economic Development

Professor Bagwell, in a recent survey of transport history in Britain since 1770 has declared

> "The changes of the last 200 years have constituted a transport revolution without parallel in previous ages. In terms of both volume and speed of goods and passenger transport the achievements of the last two centuries have completely outclassed the painfully acquired gains of the whole of previously recorded history".1

Although none would disagree with Professor Bagwell's assertion, it would be wrong to regard the year 1770 as the genesis point of the changes that he describes. It is rather a point of increased acceleration from a firm base of previous expertise and experiment. Already by 1770 turnpike development had effected considerable improvements in the main lines of road, even if road construction was still far from a science, and surfacing in places at certain times of the year so deficient as still to rouse the traveller's wrath. Road improvement is reflected in the growing volume of carrier and coach services listed in contemporary directories and newspaper advertisements. Most rivers had already by 1770 undergone significant improvements authorised by act of parliament and the next logical step, their connection by artificial cuts or canals, had commenced, greatly accelerated by the practical demonstration of their effectiveness and profitability by the Duke of Bridgewater and James Brindley. Some interest had been shown in harbour

1. Philip S. Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770 (1974) p 11

works notably at Liverpool where the growing trade with North America and the West Indies was providing prosperity for its merchants. Even the railway was making a modest contribution to the transport pattern as a means of conveying coal, ore or stone from the pit or quarry to the nearest navigable water.

This activity in the sphere of transport improvement is a reflection of an acceleration in the pace of the economic life of the nation. That such an acceleration occurred in the eighteenth century there is no doubt; the point on which historians fail entirely to agree is the date from which the movement can be discerned though 1760 and often 1780 are the dates commonly adopted.[1] Basing their conclusions mainly on overseas trade statistics, the only convenient long-run series of trade figures available for the eighteenth century, Deane and Cole come to the conclusion that the acceleration of growth can however be noted as early as the mid 1740s and that the rapid growth from the 1780s represents merely a return to a previous pattern following the wide-spread disruption of trade caused by the American War of Independence.[2] The connection between transport improvement and accelerated growth is clear. Investment in transport and industry and commerce must run in parallel, for only on the basis of cheaper transport costs can industry expand by drawing its raw materials and productive resources from a wider area, and more important seek to distribute its increased production to a wider market.

1. Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (2nd edn 1969) p40

2. Ibid., p47

Improved transport enables industry to concentrate in those areas most suited to economical production, in the knowledge that this will not impair its ability to distribute its products. The Post Office constituted part of this communication pattern, not as a carrier of goods, but as a means of conveying intelligence. If supplies of raw materials had to be drawn from a wider area and goods marketed on a regional and national scale intelligence became much more important than when personal contact and local sale were sufficient. Postal communication thus had an increasing role to play in the promotion of economic growth in the eighteenth century and it must be to an analysis and definition of this role that we must now turn.

News of commodity prices was vital to farmer, commodity speculator and industrialist alike. The Post Office were fully aware of the advantage to be gained by early market intelligence and anxious not to be accused by the commercial interests of one city of favouring another with a superior service. Aberdeen was particularly concerned that London mail should not be delayed at Edinburgh. In 1794 the delay was 12 hours and Aberdeen merchants petitioned the Postmasters-General for a reduction. They claimed that the delay was sufficient to allow Edinburgh merchants speculating in commodities, on receipt of news of price levels from the south, to send an express rider north to forestall Aberdeen merchants. In June 1814 the Post Office refused to introduce a direct mail-coach service from London to South Shields as "the Newcastle merchants would probably remonstrate badly against a measure that would enable Sunderland and the 2 Shields to encounter them in their own markets with the advantage of prior information from London". A scheme[1] put forward in 1820 by Henry Burgess for placing fast light post coaches on certain routes to give

1. See pp 163-66

an additional early delivery at premium rates of postage, was coldly received by the Post Office, who pointed out that this would give advantage to certain towns situated on the limited number of routes operated, compared with others close at hand. They indicated that they had been obliged to discontinue an early delivery at Leeds because of objections from Halifax merchants of the advantage that it gave their rivals.[1]

In a number of industries, as the units of production grew in size, there was a need to draw supplies of raw materials in greater quantity from a wider area. Locally produced materials might also be replaced by those of improved quality from distant sources. Lancashire concentrated on imported cotton in preference to domestic fibres such as wool and linen, while in Staffordshire and other areas of ceramic manufacture finer wares demanded that local clays be supplemented by materials brought from Devon and Cornwall. Often the manufacturer could no longer personally buy his raw materials, but more than ever needed to keep his hand on the market pulse. He relied upon information sent to him by letter from friends, relatives, business associates and agents well placed to receive and transmit early intelligence of market changes. The London brewing trade can be taken as an example. By the eighteenth century many London brewers were no longer buying malt from the open market in Mark Lane, but were dealing directly with maltsters in the producing counties using a malt factor as an intermediary. A considerable correspondence survives for the period 1789 to 1804 between Sampson Hanbury of Truman's Brewery and John Taylor of Bishops Stortford his malt factor.

1. POR Post 42/103/131; BPP 1821(592) XXI 203 p28; A.R.B. Haldane, Three Centuries of Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) p 57.

The same pattern applied to the brewers of Burton and other large centres of beer production. The quality of the malt was a crucial factor and when brewers wrote to friends, relatives and business associates over a wide area enquiries about the state of the harvest were frequently included. Hops were the other commodity required by the brewer and represented an even more difficult problem as the areas of growth were more restricted, often distant and market fluctuations wider. The diary of Peter Briggins, a London speculator in hops, covering the first decade of the eighteenth century, shows clearly the way in which he exchanged correspodence with William Tiby his cousin, "a professional operator in the hop-markets". Tiby regularly toured the hop gardens of Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Hereford and Worcester keeping his cousin informed of prices and crop prospects and in return receiving details of the prices prevailing in the open market in Southwark.[1]

The growth and wide diffusion of some industries was already by the eighteenth century making the post an essential channel of communication. Ambrose Crowley set up his first enterprise in 1682, and over the next decades built up an industrial empire that included slitting mills, furnaces and forges at Swalwell and Winlaton near Newcastle, and warehouses in the Midlands and London apart from his shipping interests in the trade from the Tyne to London. Crowley chose to live in Greenwich to direct sales in the capital and the Thames shipyards, and issued his instructions weekly by post to the council of officials who controlled his manufactories in County Durham.[2] Such an industrial empire was perhaps unusual but far from unique. Midland ironmasters and London and Bristol merchants were heavily involved in the development of the South Wales tinplate, copper and iron industries in the early eighteenth century but retained

1. Peter Mathias, The Brewing Industry in England 1700-1830 (1959) pp 448-50, 460-62, 505-06.

2. Charles Wilson, England's Apprenticeship 1603-1763 (1965) p 303; M.W. Flinn, Men of Iron - The Crowleys in the Early Iron Industry (Edinburgh 1962) p 195.

merchant houses and manufacturing units elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and could only spare part of the year managing each part of their commercial empire directly.[1] To evaluate and control such scattered industrial enterprises intelligence brought by letter provided a necessary substitute between visits.

To merchants trading overseas shipping intelligence was of utmost importance, and the post early played a part in advising the safe arrival of vessels or adverse weather and winds that might delay arrival and affect market prices. News of shipping losses would also probably arrive by post. Ships bound from overseas for London would often make the Downs their first anchorage in British waters. Here they could in protected waters await a favourable wind to clear the North Foreland into the Thames Estuary, and advice given to owners by letter of the vessel's imminent arrival. In June 1676 the Deal postmaster was required as part of his duties to send daily to the Secretaries of State lists of ships anchored in the Downs and was severely remonstrated with when he failed to do so. Colonel Roger Whitley, the administrator of the Post Office, sold lists of such ships to the Navy Office, the Excise and Customs and merchants.[2] This interest of the Post Office in the diffusion of shipping news was to continue, as their agents and postmasters in the various ports were in a favourable position to gather such

1. A.H. John, The Industrial Development of South Wales 1750-1850 (Cardiff 1950) pp 8, 24-33

2. POR Post 94/12/35, Post 94/14/431, Post 94/16/164, Post 94/16/172, Post 94/16/192

intelligence. From 1799 the Post Office regularly published a "Packet List" detailing the movements of Post Office packets and in 1801 this was followed by a "Shipping List" giving similar information about private vessels gathered principally from Lloyds.[1] Merchants would also utilise the posts in order to buy goods in Britain needed for export, and to dispose of that part of their imports that was not sold on the open market.

A new and highly important source of intelligence that developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was the newspaper. The London Gazette, a semi-official publication for which Joseph Williamson, the Under Secretary of State was partially responsible, began publication in 1665. Other newspapers sprang up in London following the Revolution of 1688 and the abolition of the licensing laws. The first London daily appeared in 1702 and by 1724 London had 18 newspapers producing a combined total of 53 issues each week. The first provincial newspaper appeared in Norwich in 1701 or early 1702 and by 1720 they were being published in 17 provincial centres. By 1782 61 newspapers were being printed in the British Isles and this total was to rise rapidly to 114 by 1790, 216 in 1821 and 369 by 1833.[2] The Post Office was to play a major role in the distribution of newspapers. The London Gazette from its inception was forwarded through the Post Office to the provinces where the postmasters acted as agents for its distribution.[3]

1. J.C. Hemmeon, The History of the British Post Office (Harvard 1912) pp 48-49

2. Louis W. Moffit, England on the Eve of the Industrial Revolution (1925) pp 246-47; Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) pp 147, 247

3. BM Harleian Ms. 7365; POR Post 94/14/400, Post 94/16/43, Post 94/16/69

This free distribution through the post by the Clerks of the various post roads in the London G.P.O. was extended to independent newspapers for which they acted as wholesale distributors using provincial postmasters as retail outlets. The privilege of despatching newspapers free through the post was extended to Members of Parliament by an act of 1764, and the power widely used to their own financial advantage.[1] In 1834 the privileges of the Clerks of the Roads were abolished and in 1836 it was declared that any publication that had paid the official newspaper stamp duty could pass through the post free. The burden of the free despatch of newspapers was a very considerable one for the Post Office. By 1784 3,090,948 newspapers were being despatched from London and 70,526 received there each year. By 1796 these totals had reached 8,622,128 and 199,537 respectively. A separate newspaper office was established in 1787 with a staff of 16 to deal with them.[2] This rapid diffusion by newspaper throughout the country of commercial information, market prices and early warning of wars and disturbances was vital to manufacturer and merchant.

The commercial, industrial and engineering innovations of the period of the first industrial revolution relied upon many agencies for their diffusion. In the eighteenth century there was an increasing volume of published books and texts aimed at those with an interest in the fields of science and engineering.

1. POR Post 1/12/179; Robinson op cit pp 147-48
2. POR Post 96/6 Report from the Committee who were appointed to consider of the Agreement made with Mr Palmer ... (1797) Appendix 26 p155; Robinson op cit pp 148-49, 245

Societies existed both in London and in the provinces dedicated to scientific enquiry, especially the Royal Society of Arts founded in 1754, which contained amongst its members or consultants the most prominent manufacturers in England. Its Proceedings were important in diffusing knowledge of its activities. Embryo technical colleges and schools, libraries and itinerant lecturers also helped to stimulate scientific and technical knowledge. The post had a part to play in maintaining contact between those of like interests in different parts of the country, between London and provincial societies and between projector and user.[1] Examples of the part played by the post as the agency of communication can be readily found. The Lunar Society of Birmingham, which has been declared to be " a clearing-house for ideas which transformed their country materially, socially and culturally within a generation" relied heavily on the post for contact between members. Although there was a strong nucleus of members domiciled within easy travelling distance of Birmingham several of the more prominent members lived at a greater distance and relied upon the post for communication.[2] Other provincial societies existed at Bristol, Bath, Peterborough, Spalding, Manchester, Derby and Newcastle.[3] As an example of the way postal communication played a role in the diffusion of technology, steam power can be taken as an example. The projectors who held the patent rights to the Newcommen steam pump and their agents made contact with potential users

1. Robert E. Schofield, The Lunar Society of Birmingham (1963) pp 11-14; A.E. Musson & Eric Robinson, Science and Technology in the Industrial Revolution (Manchester 1969) p72

2. Schofield op cit p32

3. Musson & Robinson op cit p14

through the post.[1] In the case of Watt's work on the improvement of the steam pump, and the development of rotative power from steam, correspondence with Dr William Small of Birmingham, who acted as an intermediary between Roebuck and Boulton in the question of the Watt patents, was vital. Small first wrote to Watt on 7 January 1768 and for the next six years was to correspond almost fortnightly providing encouragement and support which materially advanced the work.[2] Once the improved pump had been launched commercially, postal communication was vital in ensuring the efficient erection of the engines at sites far distant from Birmingham, and maintaining contact with agents such as William Murdoch in Cornwall.[3] In connection with the Staffordshire ceramics industry, it was through the agency of Thomas Bentley, the Liverpool merchant, that Wedgwood was introduced to scientific experiment and subsequent correspondence with Bentley was important in the development of new techniques and materials.[4]

A similar function was performed by correspondence in the field of agricultural improvement, and development proceeded through similar agencies. The Royal Society of Arts took an interest in agricultural innovation as did also its counterpart in Ireland, the Dublin Society founded in 1731 (Royal Dublin Society from 1745). Both published on agricultural matters.

1. L.T.C. Rolt, Thomas Newcommon(1963) pp 73, 75, 78

2. Schofield op cit pp 35, 68

3. H.W. Dickinson, James Watt (1935) pp 101-02, 109, 123-24

4. Schofield op cit pp 44-45

Permanent provincial agricultural societies date from the founding of the Bath Society in 1777 and the Highland Society in 1784.[1] Published literature such as the works of Young, Marshall, Tull and others stimulated debate[2] and interest generated correspondence, one instance of which is the efforts made by the Bath Society to gather intelligence about farming methods in various parts of the country. Not only did it receive a considerable volume of information by letter from its members, but in 1780 communicated with every High Sheriff in England enclosing a comprehensive list of 13 questions which it was hoped he would obtain answers "from some of the best farmers and send to the Society." This was the first of a number of comprehensive statistical and agricultural surveys to be undertaken in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[3]

Equally important as its role in the diffusion of intelligence, was the part played by the Post Office in enabling trading patterns to change. The eighteenth century witnessed the promotion of regional and national marketing of produce whose previous distribution had been localised. Associated with this was a growing complexity in the pattern of marketing. Between 1756 and 1777 Abraham Dent, merchant and shopkeeper of the small market town of Kirkby Stephen in Westmorland, bought from about 190 different suppliers covering the whole of Northern England and extending in a number of cases to the Midlands and the South.[4] Middlemen were increasingly used both in the procurement of raw materials and food in bulk, and in the distribution of manufactured goods over an extended market. At the same period some manufacturers were promoting direct sales over a wider market area by increasing the use of commercial travellers. Although the origins of change

1. Kenneth Hudson, Patriotism with Profit (1972) pp 3-5, 10-11

2. J.D. Chambers & G.E. Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880(1966) pp 73-75

3. Hudson op cit pp 13-14, 43

4. T.S. Willan, An Eighteenth Century Shopkeeper - Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen (Manchester 1970) pp 18-29

antedated the eighteenth century, the practicability of such a process was greatly enhanced by the improvements to inland transportation initiated in the century, especially in the later decades with the development of the canal network and the continued improvement and expansion of turnpike roads. Population growth, the expansion of urban communities and rising per-capita disposable income were other factors promoting change in the pattern of distribution. The more extended and complex the pattern of marketing becomes, the more essential is the post as a means of keeping agents of marketing in communication with one another.

Professor Alexander sees local and regional self-sufficiency beginning to break down in England in the late seventeenth century, and the process accelerating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Before this little fixed capital had been invested in marketing. Distribution costs were confined to those incurred in servicing essential food and fuel requirements, some raw materials and for the fortunate few who could afford them, a limited trade in luxuries.[1] By the mid-eighteenth century considerable changes had occurred in this pattern and manufacturers in a number of cases were thinking in terms of national and even international marketing.[2] A Stourbridge glass manufacturer who in 1751 bought out the bottle glass works at Prescott near St Helens "in order to shut it up" was clearly not thinking in terms of localised marketing of his product.[3] In the iron industry the Carron Company had by the 1760s warehouses

1. David Alexander, Retailing in England During the Industrial Revolution (1970) pp 5-6

2. Dickinson op cit pp 53-54

3. T.C. Barker, Pilkington Brothers and the Glass Industry (1960) p 40

manned by company staff at London, Leith and Newcastle with agencies in Glasgow, Hull and Leeds in addition.[1] Staffordshire ceramics were finding an ever widening market. Permanent London showrooms were opened by Josiah Wedgwood at Newport Street in 1768 (in 1774 transferred to Greek Street) and some other ceramic manufacturers had adopted this method of distribution at an earlier date still. Wedgwood had in addition warehouses and showrooms at Bath, Liverpool and Dublin, and was selling to manufacturing jewellers in Birmingham and Uttoxeter.[2] Thomas Chippendale, the London cabinet-maker, in common with other leading firms in the trade, had extensive provincial custom. He was supplying clients in Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Staffordshire, Oxfordshire, Kent, Warwickshire, Devon and sending furniture to places as far distant as Berwickshire, Ayrshire and Perthshire. Robert Gillow & Co of Lancaster and Oxford Street London extensively operating in the same trade from the middle of the eighteenth century had a stock of 200 or more designs ready for despatch by post to enquiring customers on a nationwide basis.[3]

The increased use of agents appointed by manufacturers were a sign of a widening market. Orders, sale details and stock returns needed to be sent regularly to the works. The firm of Adam and Wiggins, the Carron Company's official agents in London, were obliged to transmit to Scotland regular accounts of sales as well as a monthly report detailing the state of the Company's interests in London and suggesting new

1. R.H. Campbell, Carron Company (Edinburgh 1961) pp 109-10

2. Bevis Hillier, Pottery and Porcelain 1700-1914(1968) p204; John Thomas, The Rise of the Staffordshire Potteries (Bath 1971) pp 105, 123; N. McKendrick, "Josiah Wedgwood: An Eighteenth-Century Entrepreneur in Salesmanship and Marketing Techniques" EHR 2nd series Vol XXII No 3(1960) p420

3. Anthony Coleridge, Chippendale Furniture(1968) pp 105-23; Ivan Hall, "Models with a choice of legs - the Gillow Furniture Designs", Country Life Vol CLXIII No 4223 15 June 1978 p 1740

ways of expanding the trade.[1] Agents were essential in the export trades where consignments might be irregular and for a number of different destinations. Wedgwood used Bentley and Boardman of Liverpool and Hulme and Walmesley as his agents for export to America, Bolton and Fothergill of Birmingham for exports to Eastern Europe and other merchant houses in Hull and Bristol.[2] Middle men were proliferating in the second half of the eighteenth century distributing imported goods, assembling export cargoes, distributing manufactures and assembling stocks of raw materials and agricultural produce to supply the needs of workshop and town. All relied upon postal correspondence to carry on their trade.

The advent of the commercial traveller was also a sign in many trades of this trend towards national distribution. He carried only his samples and patterns and therefore needed to utilise the post to despatch the orders collected from clients and to receive instructions from his employer. John Aikin describes how Manchester merchants after about 1740 discontinued taking wares with them on a string of pack animals. As turnpike roads improved goods could be conveniently conveyed by waggon to meet orders that had been taken by travellers selling from samples.[3] The Carron Company appointed its first traveller in the early 1760s and had several in their employ by 1765 covering Scotland south of the Highlands and North East England. Detailed instructions were issued to travellers who were required to write from set towns forwarding orders and remitting money collected.[4] Wedgood appointed his first travelling salesman

1. Campbell op cit p109
2. Thomas op cit pp 106-110, 119
3. John Aikin, A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester (1795) pp 183-84
4. Campbell op cit pp 112-13

in 1777 after a successful sales tour of his own with pattern boxes, catalogues and samples.[1] This process was aided by the growth of fixed retail shops no longer producing all, and in some cases producing none, of the goods they retailed, a trend accentuated by the growth of urban population.[2]

In agricultural produce too, the marketing pattern was changing. Local sale and country markets were on the decline, and a growing ascendency was being established by metropolitan and wholesale markets. This change had to a large extent been achieved by the second half of the eighteenth century.[3] Agricultural areas were specialising in those crops best suited to their soil and climate. Dairy farming and stock rearing were found to be more profitable in the West especially in those areas near to rising industrial and commercial towns. The East specialised more in grain.[4]

It was not just the wider sphere of marketing that was likely to increase the use of postal communication but also the elaboration of the marketing system that accompanied it. In agricultural marketing and industry alike middle men and agents were to be found in increasing numbers each requiring to keep in touch with clients, buyers, sellers, suppliers and principals. In the century after 1660 specialist middlemen increased in many facets of agricultural marketing, and became accepted as a necessary part of the distributive pattern.

1. McKendrick op cit p425

2. Alexander op cit p22

3. R,B. Westerfield, Middlemen in English Business 1660-1760(1915) p151

4. Moffit op cit pp 84-86

Selling by sample, a practice which arose in the early eighteenth century, greatly assisted the rise of grain buyers, factors, jobbers and merchants who bought from the farmer in bulk and sold and speculated freely on the open market.[1] In meat marketing jobbers and wholesale buyers added additional tiers to the marketing structure.[2]

The growing complexity in the distribution and marketing pattern necessitated a considerable increase in the number of financial transactions, but made the chance of the debtor and the creditor actually meeting less likely, necessitating the increased use of banking institutions. The Bank of England was established in 1694, but already by this date a number of London goldsmiths were acting as bankers. By 1750 there were 30 London banks and this total was to increase to 50 in 1770 and 70 in 1800. Banking institutions outside London were few before 1750 and Burke, when he arrived from Ireland in that year estimated the number to be 12, a figure confirmed by Presnell.[3] The period from 1750 to 1765 saw the first rapid development of provincial banking and the 1784 edition of Bailey's British Directory listed 119 country bankers. Banks issued notes and this was a convenient method of transmitting money through the post.[4] Until 1795 the lowest denomination note issued by the Bank of England was £10 and these circulated little outside London. The country banks however issued banknotes of a lower denomination and a considerable increase

1. Moffit op cit pp 71-80
2. Ibid pp 90-93
3. L.S. Presnell, Country Bankers in the Industrial Revolution (1956) pp 7-8
4. Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen had been obliged in the mid-eighteenth century to tour his suppliers and use carriers to transmit money to settle debts. Long credit (often four to seven months) had to be extended when payment was difficult. Willian op cit pp 42-46

in the volume of paper money in circulation parallels the rapid growth of country banks. Cameron calculates that in 1750 out of total money circulation of about £20 millions in England and Wales, banknotes accounted for a quarter, but by 1775 the volume of banknotes had doubled to £10 million while specie had risen by only £1 million to 16 million.[1] Banks by their note issue not only facilitated the use of the post for the transmission of money but were also users of the Post Office in transactions between one another. In London the City Banks acted as agents for the country bankers, particularly assisting in the discounting of bills of exchange which flowed regularly between the provinces and London, and performing a valuable function in the settlement of trade debts and the financing of industrial development.[2]

The Post Office was also extensively used by the legal profession. The voluminious deposits of archives in county record offices show the extent of correspondence generated by established law practices. Important criminal, commercial and civil actions were heard in London as were also appeals from lower courts, leading to considerable correspondence between London and the provinces. The growth of parliamentary legislation was also closely connected with employment for the legal profession. Local acts of parliament for the provision of town improvements, poor relief, bridge construction, harbour works, turnpike roads and enclosure provided much additional legal work. This was an ever increasing load. Between 1785 and 1850 almost 400 acts concerned with town or market improvement were passed in respect of urban areas even if those concerning London are excluded.[3] The volume of turnpike legislation was likewise substantial. In the period 1700 to 1750 142 turnpikes were

1. R. Cameron, Banking in the Early Stages of Industrialisation (New York, 1967) p42

2. J. Clapham, The Bank of England - A History Vol I (1958) pp 144, 147-50, 157-58; Presnell op cit pp 4, 7-8, 11

3. Alexander op cit pp 6-7

established in England, an average of 28.4 per decade, but from 1751 to 1760 the number was 183 and from 1761 to 1770 it was 179.[1] Numbers fell off to some extent from this peak but remained at a much higher rate than in the first half of the century. To these totals must be added Welsh and Scottish turnpikes and the ever growing volume of renewal acts. In the first 30 years of the nineteenth century the total of all turnpike acts was 2,450.[2] In the sphere of the enclosure of common land and open fields only 130 acts had been passed by 1760 but the next two decades were to see a peak in enclosure with some 900 acts passed, and after a downturn in the 1780s interest was to revive again and during the Napoleonic War period some 2,000 further acts were passed.[3] Correspondence by members of parliament greatly increased encouraged by the perquisite of despatching and receiving their letters free of postage.[4]

Although no exact breakdown of postal traffic by the type of user is possible, confirmation of the business and commercial groups using the post can be gathered. In January 1796 a petition was sent to the Postmasters-General pleading the case for mails to be despatched later than the 8 p.m. departure from London, which had been introduced at the commencement of the use of mail-coaches. It was pointed out that the Exchange did not close until 3.30 p.m., "the hour for producing

1. William Albert, The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840 (1972) pp 202-223

2. H.J. Dyos & D.H. Aldcroft, British Transport (Leicester 1969) p65; Bagwell op cit p39

3. Chambers & Mingay op cit p77; Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation(1969) p73

4. See pp 53-55, Appendix 3 pp 370-71

bills is not till five", much legal business was conducted in the afternoon and "business transacted in the House of Parliament could not be communicated the same day". In 1820 it was estimated that the trades that would take advantage of the accelerated Extra Post[1] route between London and Manchester would be about 140 London branches and 240 agencies of Manchester firms, 90 firms of foreign merchants in Manchester, 30 "continental exporters of twist and manufactured goods", 120 large cotton mills and dealers and 45 dry-salters, oil and soap dealers and large grocers with a need to keep abreast of market conditions, 5 bankers and money agents, 30 attornies and 15 corn dealers. All would be prepared to pay a substantial additional postal charge to obtain their letters a few hours earlier.[2]

The gradual improvement of turnpike roads in the eighteenth century encouraged an increase in both private and public road transport. Country landowners and urban merchants travelled for pleasure as well as business. The inland spas such as Tunbridge Wells, Bristol (Hotwells and Clifton), Harrogate, Buxton and especially Bath, found favour in the first half of the eighteenth century with fashionable society, and continued to expand throughout the Georgian period though increasingly as places of retirement and residence. From about 1750 a new focus of health and pleasure attracted the young and exuberent away from the older inland spas to the coast and coincided with the recommendation of sea water cures by the medical profession.[3] Brighton, Margate, Southend, Scarborough and

1. For details of this proposed service see pp 163-66.
2. BCL B383 Acc No 32: 1874 pp 321-33; BPP 1821(592) XXI 203 p13
3. Sea water had been recommended as early as 1667 by Dr. Robert Wittie of Scarborough and there is evidence of yet earlier use for medical purposes. It was however Dr. Richard Russel's Dissertation on the Use of Sea Water... first published in 1750 which popularised this form of treatment.

South Devon resorts all had their devotees. Society also travelled more freely from country estate to London on parliamentary and legal business and to sample the delights afforded by the London season. Absence from country estate or counting house made correspondence necessary, apart from that generated by the desire to describe to those left behind the new terrain, new faces and new excitements generated in the new environment. Temporary domicile in London encouraged country landowners to place orders with London tradesmen and craftsmen. Some of these would be specially commissioned items which might take months or even years to complete, and give rise to correspondence between country and capital. The post made it possible for country landowners to employ London architects, designers and artists to execute commissions, who could with ease keep patrons informed of progress and difficulties encountered. This extended patronage helped to promote artistic achievement and quickly diffuse new styles.

The volume of postal communication ought also to bear some relationship to the level of literacy. Levels of national literacy before about 1840 are difficult to calculate because of the fragmentary nature of the evidence. Stone[1] estimates that the level of literacy of the adult population of England and Wales in 1750 was 53%, rising to about 56% by 1775 and about 65% by 1880. Thereafter it rose very little, standing at 66% in 1840. The researches of West[2] also support the view that levels of literacy were not in general depressed by the population explosion, the increase in industrial employment and the rise of urban centres with the consequent population migration, that occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth

1. Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England", Past and Present No 42 February 1969 p120

2. E.G. West, "Literacy and the Industrial Revolution" EHR 2nd Series Vol XXXI No 3 August 1978 pp 369-83

centuries. The percentage of literate adults did however vary widely from one area to another. Also a larger proportion of the population could read than could both read and write. A survey carried out in South Lancashire in the period 1834-36 found that out of a population of 56,204 in the towns of Bury, Dunkinfield, Staleybridge and Ashton 54.8% could read but only 27.6% could both read and write, and this observation is confirmed by contemporary writers such as P. Gaskell in The Manufacturing Population of England(1833).[1] If in percentage terms the number of literate adults rose slowly, in numerical terms there were substantially more potential letter writers and readers. Correspondence however was largely the perogative of the upper and middle classes. The sheer expense of postage prior to the introduction of universal inland penny postage in 1840 must have been an important factor inhibiting letter writing generally, but particularly for the labouring classes. Rates altered frequently from the latter half of the eighteenth century and although a penny might convey letters locally, the lowest rate applying to general post letters was usually 3d or 4d. The average cost of sending a letter would be much higher than this however, as payment was based on the distance carried and the number of sheets of paper used. A single sheet letter conveyed 500 miles could by 1812 cost as much as 1s 2d. There is however some evidence to suggest that letter writing was not entirely alien to working class circles. In 1793 for instance the Post Office expressed concern at the number of letters addressed to seamen that were not being delivered. Only one letter in

1. R.K. Webb, "Working Class Readers in Early Victorian England" English Historical Review Vol LXV(1950) pp 344, 350

five addressed to seamen on the Nore station was being delivered largely because of the inability of the seamen to pay the postage.[1] Thus such evidence as we have which suggests a rise in literacy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, points to its being a modest one. Most of the gain would be amongst working class groups and as these were not prolific letter writers, such rises were unlikely to generate a corresponding rise in postal traffic. It was mainly to industry and commerce that the Post Office had to look for this.

1. POR Post 40/9/65A, Post 40/16/223C; Post 42/61/209, Post 42/64/80

Chapter 2 - Postal Development and Transportation before 1784

It was not until 1635 that the public at large were encouraged to make use of the official government posts for inland letters, the service being placed in that year under the direction of Thomas Witherings, a London merchant and Harbinger to Queen Henrietta Maria. Witherings, who was directly responsible to the King's Secretaries of State, had in 1632 re-organised the posts to the Continent. There is little evidence to indicate just how far Witherings proceeded with his plans, which involved maintaining regular post routes radiating from London to Scotland, Ireland, Bristol, Shrewsbury, Portsmouth, Harwich and Yarmouth. Charles I's dispute with the Scots and with his own parliament which led to the Civil War, resulted in disruption of routes and rivalry for the control of the Post Office, in which Witherings suffered dismissal. This must have prevented the full implementation of the ambitious plans of 1635. In the more settled conditions of the Commonwealth regular inland posts were maintained once more, and the Post Office was farmed first to John Manley in 1653, and then from 1655 by John Thurloe, the Secretary of the Council of State. It was in 1657, during his period of administration, that the first parliamentary enactment regulating the Post Office was passed.[1]

It is from the Restoration that we can trace a build up of permanent postal routes and an effective attempt to enforce monopoly and suppress the many unofficial carriers of mail who had flourished when official post arrangements were uncertain. Henry Bishop, the first farmer of the posts after the Restoration, claimed to have established new postal routes which included those to Cumberland and Westmorland, Plymouth and Cornwall, Bristol into South Wales and Derby and Leicester by way of

1. Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) pp 29-34, 37-47.

Northampton. It is clear that a number of these had been operated formerly. An Act of 1663 granted the profits of the Post Office to the Duke of York and the farm from him was held for a period of ten years from 1667 by Lord Arlington, Secretary of State, and Lord Berkley of Stratton, First Commissioner of the Ordinance Office. They employed their own officers to supervise the day to day administration, these being Sir John Bennet, Andrew Ellis (1667-72) and Colonel Roger Whiteley (1672-77).[1] In 1677 a survey of the operation of the Post Office was prepared for the Duke of York by Thomas Gardiner, Comptroller of the Inland Office. This showed six main post roads radiating from London with extensive branches serving most towns of consequence in England and Wales. These roads were:

1. The Western Road to Plymouth and Falmouth
2. The Bristol Road with branches to South Wales
3. The Chester Road to Holyhead
4. The Northern Road to Edinburgh
5. The Yarmouth Road
6. The Dover Road.

Mail was despatched three times a week on most roads, though a few favoured routes such as those to Dover and Colchester enjoyed a six day service. Mails to the Continent via both Dover and Harwich went four times weekly.[2] The letter books of Colonel Roger Whiteley[3] show clearly the way in which he was actively trying to extend the coverage by the opening of new branches.

Before the appointment of the first surveyors in 1715, the Post Office was unable to supervise effectively its provincial

1. B Robinson op cit pp 49, 52-54; Howard Robinson, Britain's Post Office (1953) pp 26-27; Kenneth Ellis, The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century (1958) pp 4-5.
2. BM Harleian Ms 7365
3. POR Post 94/12, Post 94/14, Post 94/16.

operations as it had no full-time salaried staff except those employed in London. The difficulty in accounting for letters not passing through London led the Post Office to look favourably on the farming of certain branches and services. Many of these farms were however terminated in 1711, the last independent branch being absorbed in 1769.[1] The postal network at the commencement of the eighteenth century suffered from lack of cross posts connecting the main post roads. The Post Office saw only difficulties in opening such routes because checks on receipts from such services would be lacking. They preferred that such letters passed down the post road to London and out again on another post road thus ensuring accountability. In 1719 however Ralph Allen, the Bath postmaster, offered £6,000 per annum for the farm of the bye and cross posts Exeter to Chester and all towns between Bristol and Oxford, which was accepted. Allen continued to farm the cross and bye posts until his death in 1764, promoting new routes and services and funnelling additional mail into the General Post routes. On Allen's death the bye and cross posts reverted to Post Office control, and the headquarters was transferred from Prior Park, Bath to the G.P.O. in Lombard Street.[2]

The Post Office was also taking an interest in local post systems. The London district post established in 1679 by a Whig syndicate, and directed by William Dockwra, was taken over three years later, on the grounds that it infringed the Duke of York's monopoly. Local delivery within other post

1. Some routes were still operated by postmasters on days when the General Post did not service the mails e.g. Maidstone to Ashford (Kent), Maidstone to West Malling, though no rent was ever paid by the postmasters. (POR Post 42/68/250,367, Post 42/104/516).

2. Cal Tr Papers 1714-19 p 287; Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) pp 99-109; J.T. Foxell & A.C. Spafford, Monarchs of all they Surveyed - The Story of the Post Office Surveyors (1952) pp 19-22; Ellis op cit pp 30, 32.

towns remained firmly within the control of the local postmaster who might make a charge, the receipts from which were regarded as his perquisities.[1] It was not until 1765 that official local posts outside London were legalised, and not until the last three decades of the eighteenth century that the first such posts were established in Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham and Glasgow in response to their rapid growth.[2]

Postal services expanded in the eighteenth century. The basic pattern of routes established in the late seventeenth century continued, but additional post offices were opened, branches and cross posts established and the frequency of service improved. Most of this development took place after 1750. Already at the time of Thomas Gardiner's survey[3] in 1677 the Post Office had 143 post towns in England and Wales, each with its postmaster and office. This total was to increase considerably during the course of the next century.

Table 1 - Number of post towns in England and Wales (excluding London) 1721-1801

Year ending 25 March	Number of post towns	Percentage change	Source
1721	337		POR Post 3/6
1731	337	No change	POR Post 3/8
1741	340	+0.9%	POR Post 3/10
1751	344	+1.2%	POR Post 3/12
Year ending 5 April			
1761	310	-9.9%	POR Post 3/14

1. Declared to be illegal in 1772 by the King's Bench Court for general post letters delivered within the official boundary of a post town. The charge was not finally abolished until 1839 in some post towns however (Brian Austen, English Provincial Posts(Chichester 1978) p 51.)

2. Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) pp 69-74, 207-17; Austen op cit pp 100-114, 150-56.

3. BM Harleian Ms 7365

1771	355	+14.5%	POR Post 3/15
1781	411	+15.8%	POR Post 3/16
1791	449	+9%	POR Post 3/17
1801	508	+13.1%	POR Post 3/18, Post3/19.

Between the date of Gardiner's survey and 1721 there had been a very considerable increase in the number of offices, many of these being added in 1711 when the farming of a number of branches was cancelled. Thereafter provision remained fairly static with only 18 additional offices added in the whole of England and Wales in the 50 years from 1721 to 1771. The cancellation of the farm of the Chichester branch in 1769 added 17 of these.[1] There even appears to have been a decrease in the number of post offices between 1751 and 1761 of 9.9%. The reason for the reduction is not entirely clear. Some of the offices deleted from the lists between these dates were market and commercial towns of some modest consequence with long-established post offices which appear back in the lists in the 1760s and it would seem unlikely that the offices in fact closed. From the 1770s however progress was significant with 153 new general post offices opened in the 30 year period to the end of the century. This increase in the number of offices, and the growing volume of mail, necessitated the preparation of direct bags of mail at the G.P.O. in London for additional towns and this is reflected in contemporary published lists.

Table 2 - Number of post towns for which direct bags of mail were made up at the G.P.O. London.

Year	Post towns where bags of mail are sent direct from London		
	daily	4 times a week	daily, midsummer day to Michaelmas
1750	101	12	-
1760	124	12	1
1770	230	14	4
1780	275	16	-

Source: The Court and City Register (1750,1760,1770,1780 edns.)

1. Jeremy Greenwood, The Posts of Sussex - The Chichester Branch 1250-1840(Reigate 1973) pp 8,13.

There were however considerable regional differences both in the provision and in the growth in numbers of post towns. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the greatest concentration was in the southern counties, South Midlands and East Anglia. This pattern was to continue throughout the century. In 1751 the best provided counties outside the London Penny Post boundaries were Bedfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire where there was an average of 8,263 persons to every post town. Hampshire and Sussex were also well provided. The least well served area was Lancashire which had only 7 post towns in 1751 for its 317,740 population or 45,391 persons per post town. Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire were also poorly served. In the second half of the eighteenth century the number of offices in these "deprived" areas rose significantly. In Lancashire the number of offices rose from seven in 1751 to 14 in 1801, and in Yorkshire from 18 to 37. Devon, Cornwall and Somerset which also had a low ratio of post towns to population in 1751 showed a significant increase from 28 to 56. In these latter counties this brought the average population for each post town down from 23,605 to 14,834. In the case of Lancashire however the rapid rise in population actually increased the ratio of population to each post town from 1: 45,391 to 1: 49,586 despite the doubling of the number of post towns within the county. In the case of Yorkshire a lowering of the ratio of population to each post town was achieved.[1] The rising industrial and commercial importance of the Midlands and the North was however realised. The post roads to London already existed and it was connecting cross post services that were often necessary to improve provision. In 1761 alone Ralph Allen set up cross posts between Newcastle and Carlisle, York and Rochdale, Sheffield and Doncaster, Sheffield and Rochdale, Derby and Chesterfield and Ferrybridge and Wakefield apart from other posts in East Anglia, Cumbria and the South West.[2]

1. See tables 3 and 4 pp 41-44

2, PRO SP37/1/195

Table 3 - Distribution of post towns in England and Wales by region 1721-1801

Region	Year ending 25 March								5 Apr	Increase in offices 1721-1801.	
	1721	1731	1741	1751	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801		
1. Cumberland & Westmorland	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	9	10	4	66.7%
2. Northumberland & Durham	8	8	8	8	8	8	13	13	13	5	62.5%
3. Yorkshire	17	17	18	18	16	22	26	28	37	20	117.6%
4. Lancashire	7	7	7	7	7	8	9	13	14	7	100%
5. Cheshire, Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire	15	15	15	14	10	12	18	19	20	5	33.3%
6. Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland & Northamptonshire	29	29	30	27	18	19	28	30	37	8	27.6%
7. Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire	32	34	33	36	31	34	39	44	50	18	56.3%
8. Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire	21	19	19	19	20	20	21	24	24	3	14.3%
9. Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire & Wiltshire	26	25	27	29	26	33	38	41	45	19	73.1%
10. Devon, Cornwall & Somerset	27	27	27	28	26	28	31	36	56	29	107.4%
11. Dorset, Hampshire & Sussex	30	30	29	30	25	38[1]	45	50	45	15	50%
12. Surrey, Kent	29	29	29	27	24	33[1]	39	41	47	18	62.1%
13. Bedfordshire, Berkshire & Buckinghamshire	27	27	27	27	28	31	28	28	28	1	3.7%

Table 3 (continued)

Region	year ending 25 March 1721	1731	1741	1751	1761	1771	1781	1791	5 Apr 1801	Increase in offices 1721-1801	
14. Middlesex, Essex & Hertfordshire	36	37	38	40	38	36	40	43	45	9	25%
15. Monmouthshire & Glamorganshire	6	6	6	8	4	4	7	7	10	4	66.7%
16. Rest of Wales	21	21	21	20	23	22	21	23	24	3	14.3%
	337	337	340	344	310	355	411	449	505[2]	168	49.9%

Sources: POR Post 3/6,3/8,3/10,3/12,3/14,3/15,3/16,3/17,3/18,3/19.

Notes:

1. Cancellation of the farm of the Chichester branch in 1769 accounts for much of this rise.

2. Excluding Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man.

Table 4 - Average population served by each post town in England and Wales 1751 and 1801

Region	1751			1801		
	population	no. of offices	av. population served by each office	population	no. of offices	av. population served by each office
1. Cumberland & Westmorland	117,011	6	19,502	163,917	10	16,392
2. Northumberland & Durham	269,102	8	33,638	327,594	13	25,200
3. Yorkshire	484,248	18	26,903	886,305	37	23,954
4. Lancashire	317,740	7	45,391	694,202	14	49,586
5. Cheshire, Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire	293,391	14	16,300	508,985	20	25,449
6. Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Rutland & Northamptonshire	480,547	27	17,798	748,694	37	20,235
7. Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire & Lincolnshire	637,034	36	17,695	845,421	50	16,908
8. Shropshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire	292,262	19	15,382	408,807	24	17,034
9. Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire & Wiltshire	449,453	29	15,498	562,948	45	12,510
10. Devon, Cornwall & Somerset	660,951	28	23,605	830,713	56	14,834
11. Dorset, Hampshire & Sussex	316,781	30	10,559	510,063	45	11,335
12. Surrey & Kent	302,106	27	11,189[1]	595,072	47	12,661[1]

Table 4 (continued)

Region	1751			1801		
	population	no. of offices	av. population served by each office	population	no. of offices	av. population served by each office
13. Bedfordshire, Berkshire & Buckinghamshire	223,107	27	8,263	288,990	28	10,321
14. Middlesex, Essex & Hertfordshire	847,087	40	21,177[1]	1,178,595	45	26,191[1]
15. Monmouthshire & Glamorganshire	84,724	8	10,591	118,562	10	11,856
16. Rest of Wales	364,476	20	18,224	487,305	24	20,304
Totals	6,140,000	344	17,849	9,156,173	505	18,131

Sources: Population statistics: Phyllis Deane & W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (2nd edn 1967) p103
J. Marshall, Statistics of the British Empire Pt V(1837) pp 18, 22

Note:

1. These counties included areas near London served by the London District Post, the offices of which are not included in the total of post offices shown.

Both Scotland and Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century had sparse postal networks providing inadequate coverage of all areas. Having regard to population density and economic activity however they were probably as comprehensively served as might reasonably be expected. In both areas considerable and sustained improvement of provision was effected in the last decades of the eighteenth century, a feature already noted in the case of England and Wales. In 1708 for instance only 34 post towns existed in the whole of Scotland, concentrated in the main in the central lowlands and along the line of the east coast route to England and the road leading to Port Patrick, from whence packets operated to Ireland. The area to the north of the central lowlands was poorly served with only the line to Aberdeen regularly operated. Military needs in 1715 and 1745 helped to expand services[1] and by 1770 115 post towns existed. Of these however only 37 were served by a regular daily service and 13 had to be content with a weekly service.

Table 5 - Scottish post towns 1770-1790

Year	Frequency of service per week					No.of post towns	No. of services operated weekly
	6 day	3 day	2 day	1 day	monthly		
1770	37	64	1	13	-	115	429
1790	90	62	4	7	1	164	741¼

Source: The Edinburgh Almanack (Edinburgh 1770, 1790)

The next two decades saw a 42.6% rise in the number of post towns to 164 and a significant increase of 143.2% in the number of post towns enjoying a daily postal service. With a population of just over one and a half million in 1790, Scotland had one post town for just over every 9,000 inhabitants, a much better ration than that of any other part of the United Kingdom. This high ratio was necessary if the relatively sparsely populated Highland zone was to be serviced adequately. In Ireland

1. A.R.B. Haldane, Three Centuries of the Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) pp 40-43, 47-48

population density was higher and more regularly distributed than in Scotland, but the economic backwardness and consequent lack of demand for postal services is reflected in the inferior service offered in the first half of the eighteenth century. Until the 1770s no postal routes were operated on a daily basis, and as late as the early nineteenth century a high proportion of routes enjoyed a service on three days or less each week. A rapid increase in provision is however to be noted in the last two decades of the eighteenth century which increased the number of post towns and the frequency of service. Despite a rapid population rise, the ratio of population to post towns was improved, and by 1805 it was at a level roughly comparable with that of England and Wales though double that of Scotland.[1]

The stagnation evidenced in the pattern of post towns and post routes in the first half of the eighteenth century is also reflected in the financial returns. In the period from 1725 to 1744 the gross postal revenue of the United Kingdom rose at an average rate of only 0.39% per annum. This was to improve in the next two decades when the average increase was 0.645% per annum. This modest improvement in gross revenue was matched by an increase in the expense of operating the service, and net profits were slightly lower in the period 1760-64 than they had been for the five years 1725-29. Expenses in 1725-29 had represented 45.2% of the gross revenue but by 1760-64 this had risen to 60.5%. The comparison appears far from favourable but it needs to be pointed out that the expenses for the periods 1755-59 and 1760-64 would have been inflated by the higher costs of maintaining overseas packet services in time of war. By the close of the 1760s however the increasing pulse of the nation's economic life was beginning to be seen in an appreciable increase in gross revenue bringing in its wake substantially improved profits from the postal service. From 1765 for each five year period the increased revenue yield was above 10% and by the

1. See table 6 p47

Table 6 - Irish Post Towns 1748-1804

Year	Frequency of service 6 day	5 day	3 day	2 day	Total post towns	% increase	Total deliveries	% increase	population	no. of persons per post town
1748	-	-	51	68	119		289			
1754	-	-	46	71	117	-4.1%	280	-3.1%	2,372,634	20,279
1764	-	-	57	72	129	10.3%	315	8.9%		
1774	33	-	74	35	142	10.1%	490	15.3%		
1784	35	-	83	28	145	2.1%	510	4.1%	2,845,932	19,627
1794	72	2	142	14	230	58.6%	896	75.7%		
1804	142	-	147	-	289	25.7%	1293	44.3%	5,395,456	18,669

Sources: The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack (Dublin 1749,1755,1765,1775,1785,1795,1805)

J. Marshall, Statistics of the British Empire Part V(1837) p15

Table 7 - United Kingdom Postal Revenue 1725-84

Years	Average gross product p.a.	% change	Average expenses p.a.	Average net product p.a.	Expenses as a % of gross product.
1725-29	£179,725		£81,217	£98,508	45.2%
1730-34	£174,912	-2.7%	£82,344	£92,568	47.1%
1735-39	£184,639	+5.6%	£87,989	£96,650	47.7%
1740-44	£193,682	+4.9%	£105,304	£88,378	54.4%
1745-49	£207,069	+6.9%	£123,137	£83,932	59.5%
1750-54	£207,859	+0.4%	£109,910	£97,949	52.9%
1755-59	£228,708	+10%	£147,522	£81,186	64.5%
1760-64	£233,738	+2.2%	£141,340	£92,398	60.5%
1765-69	£273,264	+16.9%	£110,864	£162,400	40.6%
1770-74	£302,197	+10.6%	£140,525	£161,672	46.5%
1775-79	£338,045	+11.9%	£182,766	£155,279	54.1%
1780-84	£403,337	+19.3%	£251,331	£152,006	62.3%

Sources: BPP 1807(43) IV 71
J.C. Hemmeon, The History of the British Post Office(Harvard 1911) p245

period 1780-84 near 20% compared with the single figure rates of growth for each five year period before, with the exception of 1755-59 (10%). There was even a negative rate for 1730-34 (-2.7%). A comparison of the revenue yields 1725-84 in blocks of twenty years shows this accelerating growth in revenue even more clearly.

Table 8 - Growth of United Kingdom postal revenue 1725-1784

Years	Percentage growth in postal revenue
1725-1744	7.8%
1745-64	12.9%
1765-84	47.6%

Postal revenue as an indicator of economic growth has been largely ignored by historians, who have preferred to base their calculations on factors such as population growth, import and export trade and computed indices of production for individual commodities or agricultural products. It is not suggested that postal reveuue can be considered as in any way superior to these indicators already used but it ought at least to be taken into consideration in calculations of economic growth. Its value suffers from the fact that we are unable to apportion the revenue between social and business correspondence though in the early decades of the nineteenth century trade interests feature prominently in petitions to the Post Office and Treasury for improvements to postal services. Economic historians such as Mantoux[1], Ashton,[2] and Mathias,[3] have emphasised the importance of the early 1780s as the take-off point for sustained economic growth and therefore the commencement of the industrial revolution. Figures for gross national postal revenue suggest

1. Paul Mantoux, The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century (1928) p 104
2. T.S. Ashton, The Eighteenth Century (1955) p125
3. Peter Mathias, The First Industrial Nation (1969) p17

a substantial and consistent increase in revenue from c1765, which in the next twenty years increased by 47.6%. This might be taken as an indication that sustained economic growth started rather earlier than some economic historians have suggested. The figures of postal revenue for the 1760s were however boosted by the absorption of the bye and cross post revenue into the accounts following the death in 1764 of Ralph Allen, the farmer, and to a lesser extent the cancellation of the farm of the Chichester branch in 1769. These factors inflated gross revenue figures for the 1760s. The sustained growth in the decade from 1770 would not however have been effected. A continuation of the five year averages of gross postal revenue after 1784 showseven more dramatic increases. For the period 1785-89 the gross revenue averaged £486,587 per annum and for 1790-94 £602,514[1] but these follow substantial rises in postal rates in 1784 and other complicating factors, and are discussed later.[2]

Deane and Cole surveying trends in economic activity in the eighteenth century as a whole postulate a pattern of modest growth in the economy for the first twenty to twenty five years followed by a check, and then a pronounced rise in economic activity from c1745 to c1760, which was to be continued in the 1780s. Thus the accelerated rate of growth heralding the industrial revolution which other economic historians have traditionally attributed to the 1780s is seen by Deane and Cole as

> "at least a two-tier phase process, and that its origins must be sought in the remarkably pervasive if somewhat unobstrusive stimuli which seem to have influenced practically every sector of the industrial economy in the 1740s." [3]

1. Hemmeon op cit p245
2. See p 114
3. Deane and Cole op cit pp 48-49, 58-61

Figures of United Kingdom gross postal revenue show some evidence of decline in the late 1720s and 1730s and of renewed growth in the 1740s but the rate of growth for the 15 years 1745-60 is only 18.26% compared with 39.8% for the following 15 years.[1] The figures of postal revenue do not however appear to be fundamentally at varience with many of the indicators of eighteenth century industrial growth tabulated by Deane and Cole.[2] A divergence does occur in the late 1770s and early 1780s where the effect of the American War of Independence and the consequent reduction in domestic exports are not reflected in the gross postal revenue, which rose 11.9% between 1775 and 1779 and 19.3% between 1780 and 1784.[3]

For certain years in the eighteenth century it is possible to compute gross postal revenue figures for each individual office in England and Wales, and this enables comparisons to be made between the growth rates of areas with an agricultural base or declining industries, and those affected by technological and commercial innovation. Devon with a largely agricultural base to its economy assisted by shipping and fishing and a decayed textile industry saw a decline in its postal revenue of 30.15% between 1721 and 1751, a trend visible in most main centres of the county such as Plymouth and Exeter. In Wiltshire a similar agricultural and textile base existed though the textile industry of the Bradford and Chippenham area was still substantial. In this county postal revenue declined 17.7% over the same period. Kent with a more diversified agricultural and commercial base declined only 8.3% while Yorkshire and Lancashire, affected by improving industrial prospects, especially in textiles, rose 21.3% and 29.2% respectively. This rise was particularly

1. BPP 1807(43) IV 71

2. Deane and Cole op cit pp 48,51

3. BPP 1807(43) IV 71

noticeable in towns associated with industry and commerce such as Barnsley (+84.2%), Sheffield (+48.2%), Liverpool (+75.1%) and Manchester (+53.6%). Old established centres of county administration, marketing and craft industry did less well with York declining 19.4% and Lancaster with its shipping connections improving only 13.6%. A continuation of this trend is noticeable in the figures for the second half of the eighteenth century. The rapid expansion of the cotton industry is reflected in the figures for Lancashire, and especially those for Manchester and Liverpool. The growth rate for Lancashire was three times that of Yorkshire or Devon and shows an even greater increase than that of either Wiltshire or Kent. The lower rate of increase for Yorkshire as a whole masks important growth in the West Riding textile area. Leeds which in 1751 was not even a post town had by 1801 risen to a position where its revenue was exceeded only by Hull in the entire county.[1] The relative contribution of these counties to the national postal revenue clearly demonstrates these trends.

Table 9 - Percentage of United Kingdom gross postal revenue attributable to the counties of Kent, Devon, Wiltshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire 1721-1801.

	1721	1751	1801
Kent	2.1%	1.69%	2.07%
Devon	2.43%	1.49%	2.51%
Wiltshire	0.57%	0.41%	0.63%
Lancashire	0.98%	1.11%	5.2%
Yorkshire	2.63%	2.78%	4.56%

Sources: Appendix 1 pp 363-67; BPP 1807(43) IV 71

County revenue figures for 1801 include bye post revenue, 1721 and 1751 figures do not.

1. See Appendix 1 pp 363-67

An increasing proportion of the revenue of the Post Office was being absorbed in operating costs and a number of factors appear to have been responsible for this. A growing burden was the volume of mail that had to be carried free of charge. This rose from 20.7% of all mail conveyed in 1725 to a peak of 46.9% in 1777, declining slightly thereafter to 43.8% in 1784. These calculations are based on the value of postage remitted but in terms of bulk and weight the burden would have grown proportionally heavier because of the rapid increase of the number of newspapers included.[1] The right of members of parliament to send and receive letters through the post free of charge during the time that parliament was sitting, had been acknowledged after the Restoration of Charles II and was to be a growing source of abuse in the eighteenth century. In 1764 an Act[2] was passed to try to check the fraudulent use of this privilege but it appears to have been ineffective in reducing the volume of franked letters. The Post Office was also burdened with a growing volume of newspapers.[3] In the four years 1761-64 the total of all mail carried free (franked letters by members of parliament, government correspondence and newspapers) amounted on average to a remission of postage of £142,507, while in the four years following it averaged £155,182. Thereafter it was to rise steadily reaching on average £263,526 per annum for the period 1774-77. Of this total franked letters from members of parliament passing through London amounted to 27.5% in 1765-68 and 28% in 1774-77. As members' franks amounted to rather more than a quarter of the total free mail, if the 1764 Act had been effective in reducing them, this would have shown up in the volume of mail conveyed, but it did not.[4] It is clear that

1. See appendix 3 pp 370-71

2. 4 Geo III c24. This act gave statutory form to many of the regulations regarding franking. Franked letters from M.P.s had to be signed in full and letters could only be received at the M.P.s usual place of residence or the place at which he was residing at that moment. A list of public officers able to frank letters was appended.

3. See pp 19-20, Appendix 3 pp 370-71

4. POR Post 1/11/53, 1/11/54.

Table 10 - Gross revenue and percentage of expense to revenue, if all mail had been charged with postage 1735-84.

Year(s)	Gross revenue	Value of correspondence carried free	Total	Expenses of operation	% of costs to gross revenue
1735	£182,171	£49,700	£221,871	£83,541	37.7%
1740	£194,197	£66,700	£260,897	£103,532	39.7%
1745	£197,607	£53,900	£251,507	£108,852	43.3%
1750	£207,490	£87,600	£295,090	£110,093	37.3%
1755	£210,663	£97,700	£308,363	£108,648	35.2%
1760	£230,146	£143,700	£373,846	£146,643	39.2%
1765	£262,496	£150,513	£413,009	£104,925	25.4%
1770	£285,050	£201,019	£486,069	£128,988	26.7%
1775	£321,943	£234,960	£556,803	£148,755	26.7%
1784	£420,101	£327,439	£747,540	£223,588	29.9%
averages					
1760-64	£233,738	£142,506[1]	£376,244	£141,340	37.6%
1765-69	£273,264	£158,538	£431,802	£110,864	25.7%
1770-74	£302,197	£237,709	£539,906	£140,525	26%
1775-79	£338,045	£267,006[2]	£605,051	£182,766	30.2%

Sources: POR Post 1/11/52, 1/11/53, 1/11/54; JHC Vol XXIX 3 Nov 1761 - 30 Oct 1764 p 999

Notes: 1. average 1761-64.
2. average 1775-77.

if all mail had been revenue earning the percentage of gross revenue absorbed in management would have been substantially lower. After a steady rise to the mid 1740s it would have fallen slightly in the next 20 years and quite substantially from the mid 1760s.[1]

War added to costs, mainly by the increase in the size of the crews required on Post Office packets and the need to compensate masters of vessels lost by enemy action. In the period from 1761 to 1777 the average cost of maintaining the packets in years of war was 73.6% higher than in peace time.

Table 11 - Cost of maintaining packet services 1761-77

Period	Average gross postal revenue per annum (all sources)	Average cost of providing packets per annum	Cost of packet services as % of postal revenue
war years (1761-63, 1776-77)	£490,745	£45,545	9.3%
years of peace (1764-75)	£506,305	£26,245	5.2%

Source: POR Post 1/11/52

Thus war conditions appear to have added 4.1% to the total cost of management in this period. This was however to be considerably exceeded during the subsequent years of the American War of Independence. For the period 1777-83 the expense of maintaing the packets rose to an average of £90,476 per annum.[2] The peace-time establishment of a packet crew was 30, six officers and 24 able seamen.

1. See table 10 p 54

2. See pp 114-17

During the American War of Independence packet crews were doubled (11 officers and 49 men) in order that the vessels could take swift evasive action to escape capture, and if this was not possible to man the armaments. The wages offered to packet crews do not appear to have been higher on the war establishment except in the case of two of the officers.[1] War conditions are unlikly to have added any other increased costs to the Post Office as wage rates during the war do not appear to have risen appreciably and the average price of horse feed was actually lower than in the years of peace that preceeded and followed it. This was not however to be the case in the wars with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.[2]

Between 1711 and 1784 there was only one change in postal rates and that a relatively minor one which would have had little effect on the overall volume of traffic and revenue received from it. The Act in question which was passed in 1765[3] lowered the minimum postal rate in the General Post. This had previously been 3d for letters carried up to 80 miles, though rates of 1d and 2d applied to letters carried by the London Penny Post system. This act was designed to introduce similar rates for short distances in the General Post. New charges of 1d for one stage (aproximately 10 miles) and 2d for 2 stages (aproximately 20 miles) were authorised

1. POR Post 1/11/82, 1/11/252

2. B.R. Mitchell & Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics(1962) pp 346, 488. Average wage rates 1768-75 - London 120.625, Lancashire 197.125. For the period 1776-83 - London 121.125, Lancashire 201.375. Average price of oats per qtr: 1771-5 17s4d, 1776-83 15s7d, 1784-91 17s 9d.

3. 5 Geo III c25.

aimed at capturing local postal traffic which might otherwise be illegally conveyed by carriers and coaches. This change could not have affected postal revenue greatly and the additional traffic generated from the late 1760s was in the main due to a rise in the nation's economic activity coupled with improvements in routes and frequencies introduced from the 1740s.

The needs and expectations of postal users in the eighteenth century were similar to those today. They required

1. an adequate coverage of post towns, and postal routes operated by a regular and frequent service.
2. rapid transmission of mail.
3. security of mail in transit.

To the user of the Post Office in the eighteenth century, the efficient operation of the system was even more vital than it would be today, for he lacked the alternative means of communication and intelligence which we take for granted.

The coverage provided by the network of post towns improved very little until the 1770s. A few additional offices were opened on the General Post system before this but they are exceptions.[1] At the beginning of the eighteenth century most offices received and despatched mail only three times weekly, despatches being made from London on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. From the 1730s however a number of improvements began to be introduced. The agent for many of these improvements was Ralph Allen, the farmer of the Bye and Cross Posts, and the Post Office and the Treasury appear to have been content to negotiate postal improvements as part of the terms for renewing the farm. The improvements were mainly of two kinds, firstly the increase of the service on many roads from three to six days a week and secondly the establishment

1. See pp 38-47

of cross posts which enabled mails to pass quickly and at a lower cost from one post road to another without having to pass through London. Defoe testified to the advantages of one such cross road, which connected Exeter and Bristol with Shrewsbury, Chester, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Hull:

> "by this means the merchants of Hull have immediate advice of their ships which go out by the channel and come in, by their letters from Plymouth, as readily as the merchants of London, and without the charge of double postage. The shop keepers and manufacturers can correspond with their dealers at Manchester, Liverpool and Bristol; nay even with Ireland directly without the tedious interruption of sending their letters about by London." 1

Some improvements to posts in the north and the west had been made prior to 1735 but in that year new regulations for the Manchester to Chester route greatly improved the services between Lancashire and the West Midlands and Bristol and the West of England. A new branch was also set up from York to Hull via Beverley. The next year saw improvements to trans-Pennine traffic between Yorkshire and Lancashire and the establishment of new branches from Kings Lynn to Yarmouth, Manchester to Chesterfield, Nottingham to Derby and Malton to Scarborough, to be followed in 1740 by one from Bristol to Salisbury. Also in 1740 the frequency of service on the Bristol Road and to East Anglia was improved by the granting of a six day instead of a three day despatch of mail. Six day posts were provided for the Exeter, Worcester and Birmingham Roads in 1746 and 1747, Derby and Nottingham, Liverpool and Manchester, Shrewsbury and Chester Roads in 1755 and Newcastle, Coventry, West Yorkshire and Hull in 1761. A number of important new cross posts were also established in 1761 greatly improving communications in Yorkshire and Lancashire, the North Midlands, Cumbria and between Salisbury and the South Coast. These were

1. Daniel Defoe, A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain (6th edn 1761-2) Vol III p133.

from Newcastle to Carlisle, York to Rochdale, Sheffield to Rochdale, Derby to Chesterfield, Ferrybridge to Wakefield and Leeds, Cambridge to Caxton on the Great North Road, Nottingham to Newark and Salisbury to Portsmouth.[1] Such extensions and improvements in frequency were a source of increased revenue to the Post Office. In April 1764 a six day post was extended to Edinburgh replacing a former three day service, and its effect is clearly reflected in the increased revenue of the Scottish post towns as a whole:

Table 12 - Scottish Postal Revenue 1763-67

Year to 5 Apr	Number of days per week London to Edinburgh service operated	Gross revenue of Scottish Post Office	Increase in revenue	% increase
1763	3	£15,266		
1764	3	£15,720	£454	3%
1765	6	£18,569	£2,849	18.1%
1766	6	£20,405	£1,836	9.8%
1767	6	£21,305	£900	4.4%

Source: Bod Mss DD(Bucks) B2/3/13a

Although by the 1760s the nation was served by more frequent posts and an extended network, the method of transit and its speed had changed little from that adopted at the beginning of the seventeenth century by Thomas Witherings. His plan of 1632 for improving the speed of foreign mails had involved the application of stringent regulations already adopted on the continent for postal riders. The slackness and irregularity that had previously marked the transmission of the mails was to be replaced by a regular service despatched at fixed hours from London. Postmasters, usually innkeepers, had already been established at distances of about 10 to 12 miles along the Dover Road and they were given strict instructions

1. PRO SP37/1/195

to provide reliable postboys to carry the mail to the next stage. Postmasters were to have fresh horses available, ready for the arrival of the post from the previous stage, and they were to take no longer than 1½ hours to convey the mail to the next postmaster. Post labels were carried with the mail on which the postmasters were to record the time of arrival, and these were to be returned to London as a check on the efficiency of the service.[1] This scheme was extended to other roads in 1635 when Witherings took over the administration of the inland posts. A speed of seven miles per hour in summer and five in winter was laid down, while delay in changing horse and rider at each stage was not to exceed 15 minutes. Mails were to be conveyed day and night.[2] When John Manley took over the administration of the posts in 1654 the speeds of transmission laid down in 1635 were repeated, summer being defined as 1 April to 30 September, though a delay of 30 minutes was permitted at each stage.[3] Whether such speeds were maintained is doubtful.

In this connection it is significant that during the Restoration period, when the postal system was better organised and not subject to disruption that had characterised the 1640s, attempts to maintain the speeds laid down by Witherings' and Manley's schemes are dropped. By 1667 the official printed timebills no longer indicate a speed a transit while those used the following year specify five miles an hour regardless of the season. By the late 1670s four miles an hour was all that was claimed as the speed of riding. A number of timebills have survived for the years 1666-68, and an analysis of these journeys is listed in table 13 (page 61).

1. PRO SP16/231 Orders for the Foreign Postmasters and Packet Boats.
2. Cal SP(Dom) 1635 p116, No 114, p299 No 62; W.G. Stitt-Dibden(ed), The British Post Office 1635-1720(Bath 1960) pp 6-7
3. Stitt-Dibden op cit pp 15-19

Table 13 - Speed of Mail Transmission 1666-68

Destination	Distance from London[1] (miles)	No. of journeys[2] Oct-Mar	Apr-Sept	Average journey times Oct-Mar hrs.	Apr-Sept hrs	Speed m.p.h. Oct-Mar	Apr-Sept
Bristol	119¾	17	11	29.9	25.9	4	4.6
Chester	189¼	34	20	40.9	36.5	4.6	5.2
Dover	70½	21	38	17.7	16.3	4	4.3
Edinburgh	402¾	14	8	101.5	91.3	4	4.4
Gloucester	106¼	21	20	26.6	25.5	4	4.2
Manchester	182½	16	7	43.4	34.7	4.2	5.3
Plymouth	216	29	24	56.1	51.4	3.9	4.2
Portsmouth	72¼	12	8	19	16.5	3.8	4.4
Southampton	74½	8	11	18.6	18.5	4	4
Yarmouth	124	13	19	35.5	30	3.5	4.1
York	199¼	17	8	48.5	39.6	4.1	5

Source: PRO SP29/184, 226-8

Notes: 1. Distances taken from D. Patterson, A New and Accurate Description of all the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in England and Wales (13th edn 1803)

2. A small number of bills where there are obvious errors or where exceptional circumstances appear to have been present are not included, also destinations where the number of journeys recorded is small.

This suggests an average winter speed of around 4 miles per hour, with some improvement to around 4½ miles per hour in the summer months.[1] It is clear that some of the most serious delays were occassioned by the failure of postmasters to have horses ready when the mail arrived and providing inadequate mounts and unreliable postboys. Colonel Roger Whiteley's letter books (1672-77) continually reflect his exasperation at the late arrival of mail, particularly overseas letters arriving along the Dover Road.[2]

In the absence of any further series of timebills it is not possible to give a clear indication of the speed in the century that followed. What clues there are suggest little if any improvement, and in some cases a deterioration. A speed of 5 m.p.h. in the summer was all that was hoped for in the 1730s while in 1784 it was admitted by the Post Office that it was taking 30 hours for mails to be conveyed from London to Bath. This indicates a speed of 3.6 m.p.h. for the 107¼ mile journey. It was admitted that the mail ought to travel at 6 m.p.h., and this was the speed specified on the Post Office timebills of this period. Stops to transact office business at post towns including the preparation and sending off of bye and cross post letters, were frequent. They seldom occupied less than half an hour and in some cases a full hour. Deviations from the direct route to serve offices and individuals delayed mails further, and two Post Office surveyors complained to Anthony Todd, the Secretary to the Post Office, on 24 February 1772 that on the Norwich Road

> "The stages we have lately surveyed we apprehend are very irregular because of the mails not being conveyed upon the direct Road and old established Roads but quitting them to take in some Noblemen or Gentlemen's Seats and thereby losing much time as well as giving the Post Boys too frequent opportunities to get in Liquer and become incapable of Duty."

1. If time lost at each stage changing horses and handing over and collecting mail bags is omitted a speed of around five miles per hour for actual travelling would have been attained.

2. POR Post 94 passim; Austen <u>op cit</u> pp 29-32, 35-7; Stitt-Dibden <u>op cit</u> pp 25-29.

The increasing weight of mail was also tending to reduce speeds despite an acknowledgement from the Post Office that road surfaces in general had been improved.[1]

Neither was the security of the mail of a high order. The postboys who conveyed the mail were the employees of the local postmasters and not the Post Office, which had as a consequence, little control over them. There was thus a temptation for the postmaster to employ either juveniles, as young as twelve years old, or elderly persons for such work, as they would keep wage costs lower. The employment of postboys was not without its hazards and difficulties. The best horses were liable to be retained for hire to travellers, and inferior animals supplied for the post. Postboys were expected to set out in all weather conditions, day and night, and being unarmed were subject to unwelcome attentions of highwaymen. Under such conditions it is not to be wondered at that some lacked dedication. John Palmer when advancing his plan for the adoption of coaches to convey the mails could write of the mail being carried by an "idle boy without character, mounted on a worn out hack".[2] Palmer could hardly be regarded as an unbiased commentator but his description was in part confirmed by the opinion of the Post Office itself. In March 1796 when they were considering arming postboys, the Post Office admitted

> "that it would be improper and dangerous to entrust the use of Fire-Arms to the present description of Riders, many of whom are barely 14 years of age." 3

Theft from the mails became an increasing worry to the Post Office in the eighteenth century, as the volume of banknotes and other negotiable bills included in the mail increased. So concerned were certain tradesmen that they advised clients

1. POR Post 1/11/293-4, 304, 316; Bod Mss DD(Bucks) B2/1/29a, B2/4/7a; (John Palmer), Papers Relative to the Agreement made by the Government with Mr Palmer for the Reform and Improvement of the Posts(1797) Appendix III(c) pp 18,23; Anon., The Present State of Great Britain and Ireland (8th edn 1738) p163

2. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Report from the SC to whom the Petition of Mr Palmer of Bath was referred ... Appendix 33 p101; Gentleman's Magazine Vol LVI(1786) pp 71,294; Austen op cit 35-6.

3. POR Post 40/36/107I

not to use the post when making remittances. Thomas Chippendale, the cabinet-maker writing to a patron, Sir Edward Knatchbull of Mersham-le-Hatch near Ashford in Kent on 15 October 1770, discussed the best way that his client could remit £150 to him:

> "if any person at Ashford could give a draft payable to me or order at sight, it could be the best and readist way of sending it. If that cannot be done perhaps your Banker will pay it if you desire him, you remitting the money by the first opportunity, I do not think it safe to remit it in Bank Notes, as the Mails are so often rob'd." 1

As early as 1728 the Bank of England had realised the need to meet such a threat by issuing bills payable at three and later seven days notice, but they seem to have enjoyed little popularity. Bank of England notes appear to have circulated mainly in the London area and therefore would not have been transmitted frequently by the General Post Office, though Clapham cites a number of instances of provincial use.[2] Attacks on postboys must have increased in proportion to the volume of banknotes in circulation, which would suggest that this problem was at its greatest from the late 1760s. In the year 1770 alone eleven violations of the mails in transit are known and this may not be a complete list as the Post Office did not insert newspaper reward advertisements in all cases.[3] The most lucrative ground for highwaymen, whether of mails or travellers was the heathlands and commons near the capital, Maidenhead Thicket, Hounslow Heath and Wimbledon Common to the west, Blackheath and Gads Hill in North Kent, Epping Forest, Finchley Common and Highgate and Hampstead in the north. At an expense of £583 1s per annum armed mounted guards were placed on the post roads to escort the mail on its first stage from, and last stage to London. They were already functioning by 1770.[4] The highwaymen had only to transfer

1. KAO U951 A18/15

2. John Clapham, The Bank of England - A History(1958) Vol I pp 144, 147-50

3. See Appendix 2 p p 368-69

4. The guards were paid 1s6d a day with 3d a mile allowance for the horse. The total weekly outlay by the Post Office was £11 4s3d and this would suggest the employment of five guards. Bod Mss DD(Bucks) B2/3/10a; St James's Chronicle No 1497 25-27 Sept 1770.

their activity beyond a radius of aproximately ten miles from the capital to nulify this precaution, and in 1782 the Post Office resolved that "for the future the Mails are to be guarded by an escort of light-horse, the first two stages from town."[1] Not only did the Post Office have to cover the cost of providing this protection, which at best could only be partially effective, but had to face the rising costs of advertising robberies, rewards paid for information and the cost of prosecution.

Table 14 - Cost of apprehending and prosecuting mail robbers 1767-84.

Period	Average cost per annum
July 1767 - July 1770	£829 - 14s
1775-79	£146 - 4s - 6d[1]
1781-84	£2805 - 10s - 11¾d

Source: Bod Mss DD(Bucks) B2/3/10a, B2/3/12a; PRO Post 96/23/1; (John Palmer), Papers Relative to the Agreement made by the Government with Mr Palmer for the Reform and Improvement of the Posts (1797) Remonstrance p 8.

Note: 1. From a return provided by the Post Office for the Treasury in the autumn of 1785. John Palmer claimed that "it was afterwards discovered by the Commissioners of Enquiry that considerable sums had been omitted in the above statement."

The trial of George and Joseph Weston in 1782 involved the Post Office in defraying the expenses of attendance of over 70 witnesses. The total costs of this case amounted to £4,000. The most spectacular exploit of these highwaymen was the holding up and robbery of the Bristol to London mail at Maidenhead on 29 January 1781, when negotiable banknotes and bills in excess of £14,000 were stolen. Many of these were negotiated in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Lincolnshire and Derbyshire between 30 January and 2 February before payment could be stopped. When eventually run to earth in April

1. The London Courant 21 Jan 1782

1782 they were discovered to

> "have lived near Winchelsea, by the sea-side, in a fine house, and supported an equipage, and a kept Lady each in London for some time past, by the plunder from the different mails." 1

The Post Office were however less concerned with the additional costs involved than the effect of such thefts on public confidence, and the consequent reduction in the use of their services. In an attempt to reduce the attractiveness of the mail to plunderers the Post Office placed notices in newspapers in February 1782 advising all persons sending banknotes through the post to cut them in two and send them by different posts. A notice to this effect was also ordered to be displayed in every post office. The practice does not however appear to have been a new solution, for in 1722 when Ralph Wilson, John Hawkins and George Sympson were involved in robbing the Bristol mail twice in the same week, it was said to be "to get the halves of some Bank Bills, the first halves whereof we took out of the Mail on Monday Morning." The disadvantage of adopting this precaution was that it doubled the cost of postage, which was already substantial.[2]

Attempts to reduce the depredations of highway robbers by increasing the severity of the punishment seemed to have little effect. An Act[3] passed in 1767 had made theft from the mails a felony punishable by death without benefit of clergy. That this severe sentence was often carried out is attested to by a writer in the Gentleman's Magazine who stated that "robbers, when taken and convicted always suffered death and were usually hanged in chains near the spot where the robbery was committed." [4]

1. (John Palmer), Papers Relative to the Agreement made by the Government with Mr Palmer for the Reform and Improvement of the Post (1797) p7, Appendix III p9; The London Packet No 1661 7-9 Feb 1781; The London Courant 14 Jan 1782, 18 Apr 1782.

2. The London Courant 12 Feb 1782; Ralph Wilson, A Full and Impartial Account of all the Robberies ...(1722) p20

3. 7 Geo III c50

4. Gentleman's Magazine Vol LIV Pt II(1784) p646

The growing volume of mail had made it necessary to use carts by the middle of the eighteenth century in a number of instances. These were light two wheeled vehicles, the portmanteau of mail being strapped to the cart behind the postboy. Instances of the use of such carts are known as early as 1747 and carts are specifically mentioned in the Post Office Act of 1765.[1] Theft from such vehicles was however easy by cutting the straps through.[2] A determined effort was made in 1770 to counter this threat by the development of a standard, theft-proof type of cart. A number of different vehicles were given trials. The principles of construction were similar. A light cart was to have a box of iron, or one reinforced with iron, rigidly bolted to it. The box was to be fitted with strong locks and bolts for which the postmasters along the roads would have keys. Some carts were sprung, others had wheels of seven or eight feet diameter and one demonstrated in December 1771 was said to be "quite round in imitation of a garden rolling stone & hangs on the axtle tree between the wheels." This cart was drawn by one horse and was said to be capable of travelling at 10 m.p.h.[3] The Post Office carefully costed one type of cart, estimating that they could be manufactured for £20 each and that they would need 36 of them. They would however no longer need to provide armed guards on horseback to escort the mails and mail bags would receive less wear. They therefore optimistically hoped for a saving in cost every year after the initial one, when the prime cost of the carts had to be met. The greatest advantage to be gained from this mode of transit was however seen to be

> "the highest improbabilty that any mail should be robbed, the letters kept dry and their seals not liable to be broken as at present." [4]

The prospects for the new carts looked attractive. An attempted

1. 5 Geo III c 25
2. Annual Register(1770) p130
3. Ibid., p147; Gentleman's Magazine Vol XL(1770) p439; St. James's Chronicle No 1478 11-14 Aug 1770, No 1493 13-15 Sept 1770, No 1495 20-22 Sept 1770, No 1504 11-13 Oct 1770, No 1529 8-11 Dec 1770, No 1683 5 Dec 1771.
4. Bod Mss DD(Bucks) B2/3/5

robbery of one of these carts in August 1770 was foiled by the inability of the thieves to gain access to the mails, but this success was short-lived. In September 1771 one of the new carts was successfully broken open and robbed. The increased difficulty in gaining access to the mails no doubt deterred some potential mail robbers, but for a determined highway robber the pickings were growing richer all the time, and little could be done to stop a well-planned and executed robbery. The use of carts was however common on the main mail routes in the 1770s and early 1780s and was to continue ~~to be used~~ on secondary routes throughout the nineteenth century.[1]

1. POR Post 1/11/292; Annual Register (1770) p143; St James's Chronicle No 1660 1 Oct 1771.

Chapter 3 - Palmer and his Plan.

There has been a tendency among historians of the British Post Office to see its development in terms of a succession of reformers each in his day forcibly rousing it from lethargy. C.R. Clear, the biographer of John Palmer, adopts this view, and sees his subject, a man responsible for the early development of mail-coach transit, as one such reformer.[1] Neither is this a view held solely by recent writers, for as early as September 1818 the author of an obituary of Palmer could declare that his subject found the Post Office "perhaps the most wretched and contemptable establishment in the country: a torpid inactivity combined with the absence of all regularity, and the presence of much corruption had reduced it to its lowest ebb."[2] Is however the almost universal condemnation of the Post Office in the period immediately prior to the adoption of Palmer's plan in 1784 justified? There appear to be two main charges brought against the Post Office in this period, the first being a general one of administrative laxity and abuse by the Postmasters-General and their most important officers, of the powers entrusted to them. The second is a more specific charge, that of failing to adopt a more efficient means of transit for the mail. Few writers are definite as to when the rot set in, but as Ralph Allen, the farmer of the bye and cross posts, is named as one of the reformers, there is a tendency to attribute the decline in standards to the period immediately following his death in 1764. One recent writer has exclaimed "when Allen's influence was removed, the motto seems to have been "Go as you please."[3]

It would be futile to try to pretend that the Post Office in this period was free from what Professor Howard Robinson

1. C.R. Clear, John Palmer (of Bath) Mail Coach Pioneer (1955) pp 11-12.
2. The Gentleman's Magazine Vol LXXXVIII Pt II (1818) p277
3. Edmund Vale, The Mail-Coach Men of the Late Eighteenth Century (1960) p14

refers to as "obsolete and bureaucratic management", while corruption was clearly found by the Treasury Commissioners who investigated the Department in 1785. Professor Robinson does however in his chapter "Abuse in the Post Office" concentrate his attention on two main abuses, those of fraudulant use of the free franking privilege enjoyed by members of parliament and government officers, and the opening of private letters in the post.[1] Neither of these practices originated in the second half of the eighteenth century, nor did they cease with the arrival of Palmer on the scene. Franking certainly reached high levels in the late 1770s and early 1780s but its abuse was partially checked by Acts passed in 1784, 1795 and 1802[2] reaching its lowest levels proportional to postal revenue in the first decade of the nineteenth century, long after Palmer's dismissal from Post Office service.[3] The abuse of opening letters was a long standing one, and the surveillance of correspondence to detect treasonable plots and disaffaction was one of the main justifications for the royal monopoly of the mails in the early seventeenth century. The extent to which this was carried out will never be known with certainty though it was claimed that only 101 warrants from the Secretary of State for opening letters were issued between 1712 and 1798 and 372 from 1799 to 1842.[4] Certainly

1. Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) pp 113-25

2. The Act of 1784 (24 Geo III c6) laid down that members of parliament in addition to endorsing franked letters with the name and address of the sender should also state the place and date of posting. In 1795 (35 Geo III c53) the permitted weight of franked letters was reduced to 1 oz and they were to be posted within twenty miles of the place where the sender happened to be. Members could only send ten franked letters and receive fifteen free of charge in any one day. These measures were re-enacted with additions in 1802 (42 Geo III c63).

3. See appendix 3 pp 370-71

4. BPP 1844(582) XIV 505

the opinion of contemporaries would suggest a higher rate for the eighteenth century,[1] and the Post Office appear to have maintained a Secret Office to open and reseal foreign correspondence, and similar duties were undertaken by the Private Clerk to the Secretary of the Post Office in respect of inland mails. In this sphere again the abuse started much earlier than the late eighteenth century and continued well into the nineteeth century, and Palmer's advent would thus seem to have had no effect upon this activity.[2]

Professor Robinson clearly thinks that the Post Office might reasonably have been expected to realise the advantages offered by coaches for the carriage of mail before Palmer's period of office.[3] Commenting on the continuation of the use of mounted postboys in 1765 he concludes that "postal Officials had no interest in using the coach for their business though coaches had developed remarkably by the mid-century."[4] Certainly by the mid-eighteenth century public coach routes in Britain had been operating for rather more than a century, but had they in this time reached a stage of development where they could undertake the long distance transit required by the Post Office at speeds equal to or in excess of those achieved by the postboys? The evidence available would seem to suggest not, despite the considerable advances made in turnpiking the main roads from London by this date. An analysis of data obtained from lists of coaches operating from London is shown in table 15 page 72. This would suggest that the bulk of coaching traffic was made

1. Robinson op cit pp 119-125
2. K. Ellis, The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century(1958) pp 65-69.
3. Instances are known of postmasters forwarding mails unofficially by stage coach in the late seventeenth century(POR Post 94/14/443), while the grant of the farm of the Post Office to Henry Bishop in 1660 laid down penalties for any persons breaking his monopoly by any "coach post" (Robinson op cit p52)
4. Robinson op cit p125

Table 15 - The frequency of public coach departures from London 1681-1783

Distance	Number of journeys per week in summer											
	1681	1732	% increase per annum	1740	% increase per annum	1760	% increase per annum	1770	% increase per annum	1783	% increase per annum
0-10 miles	122	319	3.2%	429	4.3%	573	1.7%	1885	22.9%	2241	1.5%
11-60 miles	272	318	0.3%	556	9.4%	420	-1.3%	840	10%	1494	6%
61-120 miles	57.5	132	2.5%	124	-0.8%	168	1.8%	483	18.8%	1100	9.8%
121-180 miles	11	31	3.6%	23	-3.2%	44	4.6%	123	18%	488	22.8%
over 180 miles	3	15	7.8%	17	1.7%	10.5	-1.9%	61	48%	482	53%
Total	465.5	815	1.5%	1149	5.1%	1215.5	0.3%	3392	17.9%	5805	5.4%

Sources: Thomas De Laune, The Present State of London (1681)

Anon., New Remarks of London (1732)

Anon., A Complete Guide to All Persons who have any Trade or Concern with the City of London (2nd edn 1740, 8th edn 1760, 12th edn 1770, 16th edn 1783).

Attempts have been made to eliminate duplicate entries though this is hindered by insufficient data contained in the lists used e.g. name of proprietor, time of departure etc not indicated). It is however clear that duplication of entries under more than one town are few and virtually absent from the earlier lists. The grouping by distance also assists in eliminating this possibility.

up of relatively short distance routes. In 1740, out of a total of 1149 departures per week from London 985 or 85.7% were for journeys of 60 miles or less, the maximum distance that could be achieved in a single days travelling.[1] In 1760 the corresponding figures are 993 out of total of 1215.5 journeys or 81.7%.

It was not until 1770 that the number of long distance departures show any appreciable increase, and later still before a network and frequency adequate for the Post Office needs becomes feasible. It is conceivable that the few long distance routes from London might be supplemented by the ability to make connections at provincial coaching centres with other services by which the journey could be continued. As there are few early provincial lists of coaches to correspond with those issued in London in the eighteenth century, it is not easy to ascertain the volume of provincial coaching. Nevertheless those lists that are available suggest a paucity of routes other than those direct to London. Bath, because of its popularity early attracted fashionable society and those that serviced their needs, and has an above average number of published guides listing coach services. A summary of these is contained in table 16 (page 74) and this shows clearly the infrequent nature of the services except those to London.[2] Of the 45 long distance departures weekly in 1770, only six were for destinations other than London. Furthermore these services would be unlikely to be patronised by travellers coming from London as direct services from the metropolis to the towns involved existed. Liverpool and Manchester, apart from services connecting the two towns, had no routes in the early 1770s apart from those to London, though by 1781 coaches to Kendal were operating. The only route apart from the London coaches serving Salisbury

1. Anon., The Present State of Great Britain and Ireland (8th edn 1738) p 163.
2. A frequent service also existed between Bath and Bristol (12 miles).

Table 16 - Public coach services from Bath 1750-94

Number of long distance coach departures per week (summer months)

Year	London	Exeter	Salisbury	Oxford	Others	Total	percentage increase in journeys per annum
1750	3	1	1	1	-	6	
1755	3	1	2	1	-	7	2.86%
1760	9	1	2	2	-	14	10%
1765	13	2	2	2	-	19	7.14%
1770	39	2	2	2	-	45	27.37%
1777	50	2	2	2	3	59	4.44%
1784	68	13	8	5	6	100	9.93%
1794	101	13	8	10	9	141	4.1%

Sources: 1750 The Tradesmans' and Travellers' Pocket Companion or the Bath and Bristol Guide (2nd edn n.d. c1750)
1755 The Bath and Bristol Guide (3rd edn n.d. c1755)
1760 The Bath and Bristol Guide (4th edn n.d. c1760)
1765 The New Bath Guide or Useful Pocket Companion (3rd edn n.d. c1765)
1770 The New Bath Guide (new edn n.d. c1770)
1777 The New Bath Guide or Useful Pocket Companion (new edn 1777)
1784 New Bath Guide (1784)
1794 New Bath Guide (1794)

in 1774 was one from Bath to Gosport twice weekly. As late as 1782 Chester, apart from the London to Holyhead route had only one other service operating to Warrington, while in the same year Newcastle was served only by London to Edinburgh coaches. Bedford in 1785 had, apart from London services, only a three day a week route to Woburn.

If services as sparse and infrequent as these serviced provincial towns as late as the early 1780s it is a clear indication of the way London dominated the national coach pattern.[1] Such services, and even those to London before c1770 would in many cases have been inadequate for Post Office needs which in most instances demanded a six day service.

Neither was the speed of coach transit sufficient to make it attractive to the Post Office. W.T. Jackman[2] collected together from a diverse range of sources details of the journey times taken by coaches on a wide range of different routes at various dates between 1748 and 1836. These are sometimes expressed in terms of miles per hour but the earlier examples are usually expressed in days taken to complete a particular journey. An attempt has been made to translate the latter into miles per hour on a summer basis, assuming that coaches would probably make an early morning start and rest at an inn overnight, probably occupying 14 hours on the average days journey.[3] The results of the analysis are shown in table 17 (page 76). This would suggest a date around 1770 before an average overall speed of 6 m.p.h. was attainable, with little improvement in the

1. Gore's Liverpool Directory 1769,1773,1774,1781; The Manchester Directory 1772,1773; The Salisbury Guide (3rd edn 1774); The Chester Guide 1782; The Newcastle and Gateshead Directory for 1782,83 and 84; The Merchant's Miscellany and Traveller's Complete Compendium ... of the County of Bedford (Bedford 1785)

2. W.T. Jackman, The Development of Transportation in Modern England (3rd edn 1966) Appendix 5 pp 683-701.

3. J. Crofts, Packhorse, Waggon and Post (1967) p127

Table 17 - Speed of public coach travel - summer months 1750-1835

Years	Entries listed by distance travelled in a day. Number of entries	Average distance covered in one day	Average speed m.p.h.	Entries listed by speed Number of entries	Average speed m.p.h.	Average speed m.p.h. all entries
1750-55	10	50.3 miles	3.6 m.p.h.	2	5.4 m.p.h.	4.7.m.p.h.
1756-60	10	57.7 miles	4.1 m.p.h.	-	-	4.1 m.p.h.
1761-65	8	69 miles	4.9 m.p.h.	2	4.2 m.p.h.	4.8 m.p.h.
1766-70	2	90.5 miles	6.5 m.p.h.	-	-	6.5 m.p.h.
1771-75	6	96.3 miles	6.9 m.p.h.	5	5.5 m.p.h.	6.3 m.p.h.
1776-80	16	96.6 miles	6.9 m.p.h.	15	5.8 m.p.h.	6.4 m.p.h.
1781-85	11	93.1 miles	6.7 m.p.h.	13	6.2 m.p.h.	6.4 m.p.h.
1786-90	7	95.4 miles	6.8 m.p.h.	17	6.2 m.p.h.	6.3 m.p.h.
1791-95	1	62 miles	4.4 m.p.h.	16	6.8 m.p.h.	6.7 m.p.h.
1796-1800	2	106.1 miles	7.6 m.p.h.	14	5.8 m.p.h.	6 m.p.h.
1801-15	-	-	-	1	5 m.p.h.	5 m.p.h.
1806-10	-	-	-	4	5.6 m.p.h.	5.6 m.p.h.
1811-15	1	55 miles	3.9 m.p.h.	6	6.6 m.p.h.	6.2 m.p.h.
1816-20	-	-	-	11	8 m.p.h.	8 m.p.h.
1821-25	-	-	-	35	7.8 m.p.h.	7.8 m.p.h.
1826-30	1	81 miles	5.8 m.p.h.	18	9.6 m.p.h.	9.4 m.p.h.
1831-35	-	-	-	28	9.6 m.p.h.	9.6 m.p.h.

Source: W.T. Jackman, The Development of Transportation in Modern England (3rd edn 1966) Appendix 5 pp 683-701.

next two decades. At first sight even 6 m.p.h. would appear to be in excess of the speed attained by the postboy, for although the Post Office claimed a similar speed it appears in practice not to have been reached. We must however note that the coach speed assumed that the vehicle only travelled 14 hours daily and rested overnight. The postboys in relays carried the mail through both night and day and therefore would still cover more ground in 24 hours than a coach operating at 6 m.p.h. during the day only. Thus there would be no incentive to adopt coach travel from the point of view of speeding the mails on their way. Further evidence on coach speeds can be gathered from services on the London to Bath road. In 1760 coaches were taking 23 hours to complete the journey, and this suggests an average speed of 4.65 miles per hour. It was not until 1762 that a summer service was advertised by "flying machine" reaching London in "one day". As it departed at 11 p.m. from Bath and did not arrive in London until the next evening a journey time of about 20 hours was apparently necessary i.e. 5.35 miles per hour. No better service appears to have been advertised until 1780. The London to Bath road was considered by the Post Office the "best in the kingdom."[1]

It might be assumed that a significant factor in retarding both the speed and frequency of coach traffic was the condition of the roads. Dr Albert concludes that the period of greatest turnpike activity was between 1751 and 1772 which he dubbs "Turnpike Mania". During this period 389 new trusts were established in England. It is however clear that even before 1750 a significant number of the main routes, especially those radiating from London, had already been turnpiked for most of their length.

1. POR Post 1/11/293; The Bath and Bristol Guide (4th edn n.d. c1760); The New Bath Guide or Useful Pocket Companion (1st edn n.d. c1762); New Bath Guide (1780).

The widespread development of long distance coaching services on these routes thus seems to lag behind the turnpiking of the roads by something more than 20 years. The upsurge of new and accelerated coach services from c1770 may have owed much more to other factors of which the general upsurge in economic activity in industry, trade, urban development and agriculture was probably the most important.[1] Another favourable factor might have been low interest rates that would have encouraged investment. With the exception of the war years of 1760-63 yields from Consols remained at 3.6% or less for the whole of the decades 1756-76.[2] Capital requirements for the establishment of a coach service were of a fairly limited nature and might be raised from local sources and therefore the rate of interest offered on government stock in the market was less of a factor in investment than potential demand for the service planned. In the case of canals where larger capital sums were required, and the net had to be extended further to raise the much larger amounts, market rates were a consideration to a greater extent. It was mainly in this sphere of canal development rather than road transportation that the main capital investments appear to have been made in the late eighteenth century.

Repair methods adopted by most turnpikes in the eighteenth century do not appear to have differed fundamentally from those used by parish surveyors of roads, and road engineering does not appear to have taken on the aspect of a science until the beginning of the next century. The capital raised initially by mortages, and the revenue subsequently received from tolls did however enable trusts on the main lines of communication to expend sums on labour and materials well in excess of those available to the parishes. Dr

1. W. Albert, The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840 (1972) pp 42, 49.

2. B.R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (1962) p455

Albert has shown how turnpiking was a significant factor in lowering carrier's rates, but he fails to relate his researches to passenger traffic, contenting himself with the comment "that there is a voluminious literature on coaching ... to which little new information can, at this time, be usefully added." Whilst agreeing on the existence and "voluminious" nature of coaching literature, the present author would wish to take issue with the conclusion that follows. Coaching is a field which has yet to be subjected to an analytical investigation by the economic historian.[1]

If, as seems likely, long distance coach traffic providing speed and frequency of service superior to that of the postboy does not become common until after 1770, and then only on certain routes, this helps to dispell the impression of an obdurate Post Office refusing over several decades to face the logic of change in the methods of transport used. This is certainly a point of view fostered by some writers.[2] The Post Office, no doubt encouraged by improving road conditions, had in fact started extensive experimental trials with improved mail carts in 1770.[3] These were continued with a view to providing an accelerated and more secure service, though not with the urgency that they might have shown. It was the implementation of these plans that was pre-empted by Palmer's mail-coach scheme. Mail could be carried as fast and efficiently in light carts as by coach and this was clearly proved in trials on the road to Exeter and Falmouth in the summer of 1785, though coaches were to prove cheaper and more secure. It was only the rapidly rising volume of passengers travelling by coach by the 1780s that made mail-coaches feasible however. Where passenger traffic in sufficient volume did not exist, carts continued to be used and from the 1820s the number

1. Albert op cit pp 132, 168f, 180-81.

2. John Copeland, Roads and their Traffic 1750-1850 (Newton Abbot 1968) p 109.

3. See pp 67-68.

of routes operated by cart appears to have been on the increase. By this period they were achieving average speeds seldom less than 6 m.p.h. and sometimes in excess of 7 m.p.h. Palmer's mail-coaches were far from making the mail cart obsolete.[1]

Neither need the Post Office's financial results completely merit the denunciation of Palmer and subsequent writers. Gross revenue in the period 1765-84 increased by a creditable 47.6% compared with a 12.9% increase for the two decades 1745-64 and 7.8% for the two decades 1725-44. Sharp rises in the costs of maintaining the service did however result in a declining net revenue. From 1765-69 the average net product of the Post Office was £162,400 and showed a 75% increase on that for the previous five year period. This level of net product was largely maintained from 1770 to 1774 but fell in the next decade because of the greater expense of operating packet services under war conditions.[2] An even more important factor affecting profitability in this period was the increasing volume of mail which had to be transmitted free of charge.[3] But for this substantial improvements in the cost effectiveness of the service would have been achieved especially from the mid 1760s.

Kenneth Ellis has shown that the Post Office from 1762 was efficiently administered by Anthony Todd, a man of considerable ability who held the post of Secretary to the Post Office.[4] He can perhaps be blamed for not having the same perceptive mind as John Palmer and failing to realise how developments

1. BRL B383 Acc No 32: 1873 pp 243-9, 325, 329; Brian Austen, English Provincial Posts (Chicester 1978) pp 77-79.
2. See table 11 p 55.
3. See table 10 p 54.
4. Ellis op cit pp 78-123.

in coaching might be adapted to serve the postal needs of the country. He was however already 67 years of age at the time that Palmer commenced his scheme in 1784 and it was the active mind of the younger outsider, able to stand back and evaluate the situation in a way not possible to the official embroiled in the everyday administration of the complex system, that foresaw the potential of fast coaches as mail carriers.

John Palmer, the man responsible both for originating the idea of conveying mails regularly by coach and for establishing the mail-coach network and administering it in its formative phase, was born at Bath in 1742. His father was a successful brewer who also ran the new Bath theatre in Orchard Street. It was this latter side of the business which in due course came under the supervision of John. To forestall plans to establish a rival theatre, John was despatched to London with the backing of the Corporation to petition for an Act to grant the Bath theatre a royal patent. At this time the only patent houses were the London theatres in Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Thus Palmer at an early age of 26 obtained his first experience of treating with civil servants and politicians. He appears to have acquired connections with such influential persons as Lord Camden, the Duke of Kingston, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Aylesbury and the Bath M.P. Sir John Sebright, and these were to prove most valuable at a later date when he was trying to interest the Treasury in his mail-coach scheme. Palmer's quest was successful and in 1768 an act was passed making the Theatre Royal, Bath the first provincial theatre to receive a royal patent. Palmer also leased the theatre in Bristol and in order to recruit actors travelled widely. The enterprise flourished and Palmer appears to have had a good eye for talent, and several actors and actresses, including Sarah Siddons, who made their first appearance at Bath, were later to achieve acclaim in London.

It was the frequent need to visit London and provincial theatres in search of actors that familiarised Palmer with

stage-coach travel. His business also made him a user of the services offered by the Post Office. His active mind was not slow to compare the relative speeds of the coach and the postboy which on the Bath road in the 1770s was beginning to favour the former. He realised that speed was the best weapon with which to combat attempted robbery of the mails and he was fully aware of the illegal carriage by stage-coaches of letters disguised as parcels because of the faster delivery achieved by their speed and more direct routing. He therefore devoted more and more of his time to devising a method by which mails could be carried swiftly and securely on all main postal routes utilising coaches. By 1782 his plan was finalised and he started to neglect his theatrical interests to concentrate upon persuading the Treasury to adopt his plan.[1]

Palmer's plan was to use light diligences to convey the mail at speeds as rapid or faster than those of the speediest passenger coach service (8-9 m.p.h.). This would mean the adoption of direct routes and a reduction to a minimum of the number of stops to pick up and discharge mail. Speed alone would not ensure the security of the mails so a soldier was to be employed on each coach as a guard, and the diligence would carry no outside passengers to give the guard the widest field of vision and fire. Palmer felt sure that the speed and security of the mail diligences would effectively put a stop to the illegal conveyance of letters by coach - a practice encouraged by the slowness of the official post. Diligences and horses would be hired under contract, and the method of conveyance would be no more costly than that now adopted by the Post Office, for the diligence would benefit from being free of turnpike

1. Gentleman's Magazine Vol LXXXVIII Pt II(1818) p277; Charles F. Partington (ed), The British Cyclopeadia of Biography (1838) Vol II pp 525-28; John Britton, The History and Antiquities of Bath Abbey Church (1825) pp 121-24; C.R. Clear op cit pp 13-16; Dictionary of National Biography Vol XV (1921/22) pp 139-42.

tolls as a carrier of mails. Palmer envisaged not only a network of routes radiating from London with a regular uniform departure of the mails, earlier than existing times, but also a network of cross post mail-coaches timed to connect with those from London. Committees of gentlemen, merchants and other post users were to be set up in the main centres of population to suggest improvements. Although Palmer did not envisage any increased cost in the transit of the mail he did feel that the improved service, which could mean the saving of half in the delivery time, did warrant an increase in postage rates of as much as a half. This latter suggestion he justified by declaring that "Postage is really no tax, but a fair and reasonable price for so much labour, which Government, by its monopoly, is enabled to do cheaper than any individual." This suggestion was designed to appeal to the Treasury and also to Palmer's self-interest as he hoped to be a direct beneficiary from increased profitability of mail services brought about by his plan.[1]

Palmer had spent several years and had neglected his theatrical interests to perfect his plan. He had enlisted the aid of others such as Thomas Grey, a Nottingham stage-coach proprietor, and Humphrey Repton, who was later to make his name as a landscape designer, but was at this time in partnership with a man called Crouse in an East Anglian coaching enterprise.[2] Palmer was far from being a philanthropist and expected a return from his £7,000 investment.[3] He had in mind

1. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Report from the Select Committee to whom the Petition of John Palmer ... was referred ... Appendix 33 pp 101-08.

2. POR Post 96/21/53; J.C. Loudon, The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the late Humphrey Repton Esq (new edn 1840) p14. Dorothy Stroud, Humphrey Repton(1962) p25 states that Repton "played a considerable part in the immense success" of Palmer's plan and this idea is repeated by Edward Hyams, Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton(1971) p123. References to Repton's role in postal records of the period suggest that he played only a relatively minor role in connection with the operation, in partnership with Crouse, of the first mail-coach routes in East Anglia.(POR Post 96/21/4(2 Apr 1785); BRL B383 Acc No 32:1872 p179; Thomas A. Croal, A Book About Travelling(1877) p194)

3. BPP 1807(31) II 101 p57.

a fellow citizen of Bath, Ralph Allen whose fortune had been materially assisted when in 1719 he took over the farm of the bye and cross posts.[1] He retained this farm until his death in 1764 increasing his profits from this source to £11,000 p.a. in the early 1760s. Palmer in his negotiations with the Treasury, both before and after the adoption of his plan, referred to Allen's farm and in May 1785 sent to William Pitt, the Prime Minister, a copy of Ralph Allen's own narrative,[2] which had been prepared in 1761 to publicise and justify his farm. Clearly Palmer could not expect a farm of the main post routes of the kingdom, on which the mail-coaches would run, neither could he hope to finance the provision of the mail-coaches. He was however determined not to settle for less than a share in the expected benefits of his scheme, to be executed under his guidance. The settlement was eventually negotiated on the basis of a fixed salary for his official duties in introducing and administering the plan and a percentage payment based on the increase in postal profits.[3] Throughout Palmer's career as an officer of the Post Office lasting a little in excess of seven years, and his subsequent fight to retain his percentage, he constantly harked back to Ralph Allen as an example of the way in which he had been shamefully treated. Palmer claimed his improvements, openly given, had transformed the whole of the postal traffic of the kingdom, Allen's was only a partial improvement of a limited part of the posts.[4] For example in 1797 Palmer declared:

> "Could I therefore, be allowed the same uncontrolled power of managing this business, as an individual exercises his trade or manufacture, and as MR ALLEN was allowed in the conduct of the Cross-Posts, he being exempted from any control from the Post Office, I might so reform its abuses, and extend and improve the business and its profits I might in time procure as large a life income as MR ALLEN derived from the whole increase procured by him, being about £14,000 a year."[5]

1. See pp 36-37.
2. PRO SP37/1/195.
3. POR Post 96/1
4. POR Post 1/15/183; Post 96/22/62
5. (John Palmer), Papers Relative to the Agreement Made by Government with Mr. Palmer for the Reform and Improvement of the Posts (1797) p iii.

Second only to Allen's farm in inspiration and annoyance to Palmer, was a poundage of 2½% on the annual packet expenditure at Harwich, Dover and Falmouth paid to Anthony Todd, the Secretary to the Post Office in his capacity as London agent for the owners and captains.[1]

That Palmer regarded a farm as preferable even to his percentage is clear. He suggested to the Treasury in April 1786 and again in May 1788 that he should be allowed to farm the cross posts for life, at an addition of £2,000 on the level of revenue produced in April 1786. At the end of each seven year period half his net profits for the highest year were to be added to the rent. Also in 1788 and again in 1791 he sought the farm of the London Penny Post in lieu of his percentage. Neither suggestion was taken up by the Treasury. They too were aware of Allen's profits and had no wish to repeat such a farm.[2] The Post Office had in fact commenced eliminating the farming of its branches as early as 1711.[3] The inclination of the age was also against the making of private profits from government enterprises and revenues. Adam Smith had in 1776 denounced the farming of taxes in France and pointed to its evils.[4] Parliament had appointed a "Select Committee to enquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments ... received in the Several Public offices therein mentioned" and in 1788 the Post Office came under close scrutiny in its tenth report.[5] The age of the free lance projector in the field of government services was at an end and Palmer could not reconcile himself to being merely a salaried officer.

1. (John Palmer), Papers relative to the Agreement made by Government with Mr Palmer for the Reform and Improvement of the Posts (1797) p2; Ellis op cit p25.

2. POR Post 97/5/388; BPP 1807(31) II 101 p36; (John Palmer), Papers relative to the Agreement ... (1797) pp 6, 56.

3. Cal Tr Papers 1714-19 p287

4. Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (Everyman edn 1929) Vol II pp 384-6

5. Ordered to be published 1793 and included in BPP 1806(309) VII.

He sought an independence to promote his plan that was greater than he had justification in expecting, and sought a profit from his labours which the age was unwilling to concede in full.

In persuading the Treasury to give its blessing to the scheme, Palmer relied heavily upon the good offices of the Bath M.P. John Jeffreys Pratt and his father Lord Camden, and it was through their agency that he was able in the autumn of 1782 to explain his scheme to William Pitt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. The plan was favourably received and Pitt advised Palmer to continue his efforts to perfect the plan. In January of the next year additions had been made and the plan was once more presented. The fall of the Tory government and the coming to power of their opponents, the Fox-North coalition, might well have been disastrous to Palmer but luckily the new Secretary to the Treasury was the dramatist politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan, a friend of Palmer. Despite strong united Post Office objections presented in July 1783 Palmer was encouraged to continue with his preparations to implement the plan which it was hoped to commence early in 1784. Once more however political change caused delay. The Fox-North coalition fell in December 1783 and Pitt returned to power both as Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, but with minority support in the Commons, and his position was not secure until his decisive election victory in April 1784. Pitt almost immediately after the election decided to adopt Palmer's plan. Not only was he satisfied of the desirability of conveying mails by light coach, but was anxious to raise revenue. He saw the advanced rates of postage envisaged in Palmer's plan as a welcome replacement for a proposed coal tax which he knew would rouse opposition. Pitt arranged a meeting at the Treasury on 21 June between Palmer and Post Office officials, and overuled the continuing objections of the latter, ordering Palmer to implement his plan from the beginning of August. It was on 2 August that the first mail diligence operated on the trial service between London and Bristol via Bath.[1]

1. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 6 p52; Papers Relative to the Agreement with Mr Palmer...(1797) Appendix III(c) p31; Clear op cit pp 17-19

In June 1783 the Post Office supplied the Treasury with detailed objections to Palmer's plan. These consisted of opinions submitted independently by three important Post Office officials namely Philip Allen, Controller and Resident Surveyor of the Bye Letter Office, Nathan Draper, Resident Surveyor of the Inland Office and George Hodgson one of the three Riding Surveyors. Howard Robinson, when dealing with these objections treats them with ridicule and comments that "their observations would be amusing if they did not reveal so much bureaucratic smugness."[1] It is as well to remember however that these were the observations of three men well experienced in the postal service, and in positions where they daily regulated the transmission of mails. Their conclusion that the plan should be rejected was in the light of experience shown to be wrong, but as Kenneth Ellis remarks their objections were far from frivolous.[2] In part they misunderstood Palmer's intentions thinking that he had it in mind to contract mails to stage-coach proprietors on the basis of their existing services and timetables, a line of action that would have thrown the entire postal system with its interconnecting services into confusion. They were also afraid of the lack of security which might result if the mails were placed in the hands of persons whose primary concern was not postal transmission. This misunderstanding may have been the result of having insufficient detail regarding Palmer's intentions. Thus they regarded him as an outsider who had failed to fully think out the implications of his scheme. They agreed that it was possible to despatch mail down a single turnpike road, like that to Bath in less time, but on many cross roads where mail travelled, coaches did not and passenger traffic was not available. Mails were despatched from

1. Robinson op cit pp 134-36
2. Ellis op cit p100

London at about 1 a.m., an hour when passengers would not want to travel. To despatch earlier would mean closure of the Post Office well before business houses had closed for the day and would raise strong objections. The practicality of using soldiers for guard duties was also questioned.[1]

They did not however entirely reject the concept of conveying mails by coach. Philip Allen declared,

> "Contracting with the Masters of Diligences to carry the Mails and a Guard to protect them is too speculative to give a certain opinion upon." 2

but they were uncertain of its sucess and apprehensive of allowing an amateur who they imagined was unaware of the complexities involved in the network of mail routes, freedom that might result in the whole system being disrupted and permanently damaged. Philip Allen was only too aware of the complexity of the exercise,

> "If the present course of the post is to be altered, the whole system of conducting the bye and cross road letter business must go through an entire change. The taxing and circulating of letters must be new modelled at every Post Office in the kingdom, new and uncertain channels must be found out for the conveyance of them at different times into other roads and branches and new cheques and accounts must be invented to answer a new mode of conveyance...and this business will be varying as Mr. Palmer proceeds further in the execution of his plan, which will be a work of infinite labour and much time, and it is apprehended, will not be perfect at last." 3

Apart from the fear of the unknown and the capacity of Palmer to undertake the task there were other considerations. If Palmer was to carry out his plan he would have to be given the directorship of the inland posts which would place him in a position of power of such significance within the Post Office that he would be an effective rival to Anthony Todd, the Secretary to the Post Office. There was also

1. POR Post 1/11/291-339; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 308-9; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 33 pp 101-28; Papers Relative to the Agreement ... with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix III(c) pp 18-26.

2. POR Post 1/11/301

3. Papers Relative to the Agreement ... with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix III(c) pp 112-13.

the fear that Palmer's assistants in devising the plan would also seek senior positions in the office. The whole structure of promotion at higher levels in the Post Office was threatened to the disadvantage of existing officers. The Post Office felt in any case that it could achieve Palmer's main aim of speeding up postal traffic by its own scheme of developing improved post carts. If a diligence could travel at 9 m.p.h. so could a light cart. A scheme was forwarded to the Treasury in June 1783 in an attempt to forestall the commencement of Palmer's coaches though it was admitted that to achieve speeds equal to those of a diligence the allowance paid to postmasters for riding work might have to be doubled. In the summer of 1785 fast carts were introduced on the road to Exeter and Falmouth bettering the time taken by stage-coaches by 10-12 hours and 26-30 hours respectively.[1]

The implementation of Palmer's plan did in fact raise some problems which the objectors of 1783 had forecast. The attempts to despatch mails at 8 p.m. by closing the main London office at 7 p.m. resulted in objections from London merchants culminating in a protest meeting on 10 March 1786 at the London Tavern. At first the fact that the Bath and Bristol mails were despatched at an earlier hour than the rest of the country caused confusion with letters being posted for these destinations after the post had left. The rapid extension of the coach network and the standardisation of the hour of despatch at 8 p.m. was eventually accepted under protest, the commercial and professional world realising the advantages of the rapid transit offered by coach and being bought off with assurances of an earlier hour of delivery of the mails in the morning. Palmer also initially found trouble trying to ensure that the coaches kept time, while the acceleration of mails on the main routes

1. POR Post 97/5/376-77; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 243-49, Acc No 32:1874 pp 325, 329, 357; Ellis <u>op cit</u> p101

caused a deterioration of service on some bye and cross roads. His plan for using soldiers as guards on mail-coaches was found to be impracticable.[1]

After the meeting of 21 June 1784 at the Treasury it was clear that a trial of Palmer's scheme would be sanctioned regardless of the strong views against it expressed by the Post Office. Although the Treasury had required co-operation to ensure a fair trial of the plan, Todd and other postal officers had a vested interest in its failure. Initially they refused to alter the schedule of timings on the London to Bristol road claiming that if the mail-coach went faster than before it would throw into confusion all the branches and cross posts associated with the road. On 19 July Todd sent a surveyor along the road to instruct the postmasters to keep the old schedules and on 27 July confirmed his instructions by circular. As speed was the major advantage of Palmer's scheme he protested to the Treasury, and on 30 July instructions were issued in Pitt's name requiring Todd to adopt the schedules required by Palmer and to inform "the several postmasters on the road that the plan is entered upon with the perfect approbation of the Gentlemen of the Post Office in order that they may be more earnest in promoting an object that may otherwise strike them to be in rivalship with their old Masters and Methods."[2] Despite Treasury approval the Post Office officials under Todd and Samuel Potts, Controller of the Inland Office, did all in their power to hamper the venture. They insisted on postmasters "signing the way bill so particularly as to be able to swear to it if required" and every other part of their duty" with a view to increasing the delay", while Wilson, the mail-coach contractor was told that it was unlikly the trial would continue for more than two or three weeks and that it would be inadvisible to excite

1. POR Post 97/5/367; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 243-49, Acc No 32:1874 pp 321-23, 330-31

2. POR Post 96/21/2; Ellis op cit pp 101-02

resentment "by too active an attention to the business". Palmer's further protests brought a letter from the Treasury to the Postmasters-General on 25 August asking them to

> "give the most positive orders to all your officers to afford every assistance to Mr. Palmer in the carrying the same into Execution, and that you will furnish him with such Powers as will effectively secure the obedience of the sev[l] Postmasters to the Directions they shall receive from him respecting the due and effectual Execution of his Plan." 1

Todd having lost his fight to reject the plan entirely, was determined to check any further extension. His officers had indicated in their objections put forward to the Treasury in June that the Bath Road was not typical. The post road nearly coincided with the turnpike road and stage-coach services were well established and competitive. The fact that a service by coach was possible on this road "should not be the standard for a more general and intricate Regulation." As early as 23 September Todd had prepared statistics throwing doubt on the success of the trial service to Bristol and on 3 October the Treasury ordered a halt on extensions then being arranged. Palmer was furious and the next day wrote to George Rose at the Treasury accusing Todd of obstruction and threatening to throw up the whole project and through friends in parliament raise Todd's conduct there. Palmer was reassured and persauded to await the outcome of the Treasury evaluation of the trial on the Bristol road. As late as December 1784 Todd was bombarding the Treasury with objections and reasons for the abandonment of the plan, while Palmer was declaring that he was aware of the difficulties he faced in extending the mail-coach network and could contend with them all "excepting only the mischief that may arise to his Plan to Correspondence and the Revenue from the machinations of the officers of the Post Office."[2] All that Todd

1. POR Post 96/21/3; Post 97/5/61; PRO T27/36/411

2. POR Post 1/11/301, 1/11/307; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 308-09, 320; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 33 p110; 1812-13(260) IV 735 p14; Ellis op cit p102.

managed to achieve by his opposition was a delay of about two or three months to the commencement of the London to Norwich service. By January 1785 authority had been given by the Treasury to proceed with this route but Post Office opposition however continued. There were sharp exchanges between Palmer and Todd over the wording of the newspaper advertisements announcing the East Anglian service. Palmer wished the wording to convey the impression that the trial on the Bristol road had been successful and that the provision was now being extended. Todd wanted the wording to imply that this was a "further trial" thus throwing doubts on the permanency of the enterprise. Further delay ensued and Palmer was fearful that this would induce the contractors "finally to relinquish their engagements". He had eventually to agree to the words "further trial" in order that the service might commence on 25 March 1785, but immediately Philip Allen sent instructions to postmasters on the road contradicting those issued by Palmer. At this stage Palmer was firmly convinced that postmasters were being encouraged by Todd and senior officials to disobey his orders and disrupt services. Postmasters would in many cases have required little encouragement as the use of mail-coaches reduced their income. They no longer profited from contracts for the carriage of mail by cart or rider on the main post routes, which from the very establishment of the Post Office had been in the hands of postmasters.[1]

Backed by determined Treasury support however, Palmer set about extending the coach network. On 5 April a cross post service from Bristol to Portsmouth was converted to a coach route. On 25 July services to Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool followed and by October routes to Portsmouth, Poole, Milford Haven, Ludlow, Shrewsbury, Cirencester, Holyhead, Carlisle, Dover and Exeter had been established. Palmer,

1. POR Post 96/21/5, Post 96/21/67; Ellis op cit pp102-03

long exasperated by the Post Office opposition and Treasury delay, once approval was at last given, appears to have engaged in frenzied activity in the third quarter of 1785.[1] His haste however to establish the network and secure his position was unwise. The predictions of his opponents began to come true. Arrangements had been made with insufficient care and he had inadequate staff to supervise the new routes. With the advent of winter the regularity of the system came into doubt. Coaches ran late, contractors complained of the high cost of animal feed, poor road conditions and the lack of passengers and threatened to cease running the coaches. Letters were as a consequence delivered several hours late and there were protests from London commercial circles.[2] Todd was jubilant. Those roads operated by carts were maintaining their schedules, those by coach not. On 1 March 1786 the Treasury received a further memorial from the Post Office aimed at showing Palmer's scheme was prejudicial both to postal revenue and the commerce of the nation. Lord Tankerville's appointment as Postmaster-general in January 1786 was also a blow to Palmer's plan as he favoured the ambitious First Clerk to the Secretary, Thomas Todd, who was closely identified with the plan to operate fast mail carts. Luckily for Palmer Lord Tankerville had other enemies than himself. He quarrelled violently with the joint Postmaster-general Lord Carteret, while Anthony Todd resented his cousin's ambitions. The Treasury still maintained its faith in Palmer's scheme and Anthony Todd felt that his best interest might lie in coming to an accommodation with him. In August 1786 Tankerville was forced by Pitt to resign because of his inability to work with Carteret and his refusal to sanction Palmer's appointment in the Post Office. Thereafter opposition to the plan ceased. Todd, already 69 years of age was content to relinquish his powers over the transmission of inland mails to Palmer,

1. See Appendix 3 pp 370-71

2. POR Post 96/1, Post 96/21/5; Post 97/5/367; PRO 30/8/232 pp 130-32, 267-93; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix VI p52.

and within a short while a good working relationship was established between the two men. Palmer found that under Lord Carteret, who remained Postmaster-general until 1789, he was allowed considerable freedom to administer and extend his plan and arrange the inland posts generally as he pleased.[1]

When Palmer first advanced his ideas to the Treasury, dazzled by the example of Allen's success as a promotor, he proposed that he should be remunerated for his efforts solely by the payment of 2½% on the future net increase in Post Office revenue. He would receive no salary or expenses, and should the scheme prove unprofitable no reward of any kind. The level of the net income of the Post Office on which his percentage was to be calculated was £150,000 p.a. Palmer sought his appointment to carry out the plan of reform under Treasury warrant. He claimed that he submitted these terms to Pitt through his secretary Dr Pretyman and received an ~~verbal~~ oral reply that they were thought to be fair. Nothing was put in writing at this date and Charles Bonnor, appointed by Palmer as his deputy in the execution of the mail-coach scheme, was subsequently to deny that Pitt had agreed the terms. The terms were certainly fair to Palmer, who promoted his scheme by arguing that the posts were "in the worst possible state, and their revenue decreasing." The average net product of the Post Office in the period 1780-84 was however already £152,006 p.a., well above Palmer's base figure. Furthermore it was adversely affected in this period by the high costs of maintaining the packets under war conditions which would fall considerably now peace had been restored. His plan also contained proposals for raising postage rates by a third. Thus even if the plan had little effect in promoting traffic a rise in profitability might be expected.[2]

1. POR Post 96/22/66; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix VI pp 54-55; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix VI p53; Ellis op cit pp103-08

2. POR Post 96/1; Post 97/5/312; BPP 1807(31) II 101 p3; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) p iii; C Bonnor, Mr Palmer's Case Explained(1797) p8.

By the summer of 1785 the Treasury were sufficiently satisfied of the usefulness of Palmer's scheme to begin serious negotiations on the nature and amount of his remuneration. An offer was made through J.J. Pratt, the Bath M.P. of a fixed salary of £1,500 p.a. and a commission of 2% on the increase of the net revenue since the commencement of the scheme. Palmer appears to have repeated his original request for 2½% without salary. By October agreement had been reached on the basis of a salary of £1,500 and 2½% of any increase over the net current revenue of the Post Office. This already reflected the increase in postal rates imposed as part of Palmer's plan and was set at £240,000. Palmer was to be appointed to the new post of Surveyor and Comptroller-General for life by Treasury warrant. In financial terms the new formula of salary and percentage above £240,000 was less favourable than the original claim, but Palmer was anxious for an early settlement to demonstrate the permanency of his scheme and counter Post Office opposition. A draft agreement was drawn up as a result of consultation between Palmer and Treasury officials.[1]

Palmer's hopes for an early appointment were however to be frustrated. The draft agreement was submitted to the Attorney-General who pointed out that under the terms of the Post Office Act of 1711 (9 Anne c10) Palmer could only be appointed to a position in the postal service if he was directly under the orders of the Postmasters-General. In view of the attitudes hostile to his plan held by the Postmasters-General and the senior officials, Palmer was not anxious for such an appointment, but Pitt was not unnaturally unprepared to consider legislation to cover an exceptional appointment under the Treasury. Time was not on Palmer's side. He desperately needed the powers over the management of the Inland Department of the Post Office that an official appointment would give him, including the power to suspend

1. POR Post 1/3/24; Post 96/1, Post 96/21/19; BPP 1807(31) II 101 p1; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer (1797) p3, Remonstrance p3; C. Bonnor, Mr Palmer's Case Explained(1797) p11

insubordinate officers. He was also in financial difficulties having received no salary or expenses since the commencement of the development of his ideas seven years earlier, and had for nearly two years been obliged to employ and pay staff from his own pocket. His former income from theatrical management had ceased, and he was obliged to borrow money from week to week.[1] He therefore reluctantly agreed to an appointment under the Postmasters-General and in June 1786 the warrant of appointment was forwarded for their signatures. Lord Tankerville, opposed the scheme in principle, and expressed doubts about the legality of the percentage demanded by Palmer. The matter was referred to the Attorney-General who indicated that the terms of remuneration were perfectly legal. Lord Carteret, already at enmity with his fellow Postmaster-General, signed the warrant while Lord Tankerville still declined. This obstruction was however removed with the dismissal of Lord Tankerville on 11 August 1786. Palmer's troubles were not however over. Lord Clarendon, Tankerville's successor was also uneasy about the percentage, and as a compromise the Postmasters-General suggested to Pitt that the percentage be dropped and a salary of £3,000 paid instead. This idea pleased neither Palmer who would have lost financially, nor Pitt who favoured the percentage as an incentive to the reforming zeal of his protegee.[2]

Palmer's need was however pressing and a limited appointment was made on 5 August 1786 omitting the percentage which was to be settled later, and a payment of £4,000 was made towards the expenses and salary due. He was not finally appointed until 2 July 1789 when the terms of £1,500 p.a. and 2½% on the net revenue above £240,000 was confirmed and an agreed figure of £3,000 established as a "full satisfaction for

1. POR Post 96/21/19, Post 96/22/62; BPP 1807(31) II pp 3-4, Appendix 6 p52; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) p3; Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates Vol XI (1808) p180

2. POR Post 96/1, Post 96/21/19, Post 96/22/62; Post 97/5/408; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) p3; Ellis op cit pp 104-08

the Services and Expenses in forwarding the Plan for the better conveyance of the Mails prior to the commencement thereof." Palmer must have been less apprehensive by this date of accepting the terms of his appointment. The mail-coach network was well established and successful and the Post Office opposition had ceased. Lord Walsingham had been appointed Postmaster-General in 1787 in succession to the Earl of Clarendon and the Earl of Westmorland had joined him in 1789 in place of Lord Carteret. The department was now headed by two men who had no connections with the unpleasant early days of strife following the implementation of the scheme.[1] Seemingly by the summer of 1789 Palmer had achieved virtually all that he had desired. He was effectively the senior officer of the Post Office with influence greater than even that of Anthony Todd. The ill-health of the elderly Secretary the year previously had prompted Palmer to suggest that he should take over his duties at no extra salary and the position be abolished. Palmer claimed that Pitt had agreed to this arrangement when he had been appointed, and as "the whole of the executive Duty" was already in his hands the position of Secretary was not only redundant "but humiliating to the Person that holds it & my own rendered unpleasant & open to Jealousy & Mis representation." Anthony Todd did not resign and was to continue to survive in office until his death in June 1798 at the age of 81. Further at the time of his death the Secretaryship was once more the senior appointment in the Post Office. Palmer had been dismissed in June 1792 and the office of Surveyor and Comptroller-General lapsed with him.[2]

The main reason for Palmer's rapid exit from the scene was his inability to accept any reasonable degree of subordination

1. POR Post 1/14/2-7; Post 96/22/62, Post 96/23/4; BPP 1807 (31) II 101 pp 3-4, Appendix 6 pp 55-56; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer(1797) p2

2. POR Post 96/22/63; Ellis op cit pp 122-23

and control. His attitude towards authority in the Post Office had quite naturally been jaundiced by the opposition that he had met in the early years of implementing his plan. This so coloured his thoughts that quite innocent actions by others might, without further investigation, be fiercely denounced as attempts to sabotage his endeavours. In December 1787 Lord Walsingham, only recently appointed Postmaster-General, received an advance copy of the report of the parliamentary commissioners who had been enquiring into the fees and emoluments in the Post Office. Palmer was not shown the report but Anthony Todd was. Further, Palmer heard that Walsingham had employed clerks to make a copy and had commented in the margin on certain of the commissioners' observations, including some evidence provided by Palmer which gave an over-confident account of the success of his plan. On this basis he assumed that Walsingham was opposed to his scheme and was attempting to plot its discontinuance. His conclusions were entirely erroneous and he was obliged to apologise for his suspicions and excused himself by citing "the tedious and distressing opposition I had for above four years."[1]

Palmer's appointment as Surveyor and Comptroller-General, with powers to suspend officials disobedient to his orders, had eliminated those sources of obstruction that had plagued him in the past. He regarded himself as virtually untrammelled and able to execute his plans with minimal reference to the Post Office Board and Treasury. Admittedly supreme power in the Post Office was vested in the joint Postmasters-General but Palmer had scant regard for the office. The appointment in the eighteenth century had on the whole been regarded as a refuge for the mediocre and superannuated and "experience, vigour and ability were not deemed essential." It provided a comfortable salary with a minimal amount of endeavour, the most important decisions being taken by the Secretary to the Post Office. Lord Carteret (H.F. Thynne) who

1. POR Post 96/22/65, Post 96/22/69

held the position from 1770 to 1789 spent most of his time hunting, gambling and rebuilding Haynes Park, Bedfordshire, while Anthony Todd took all effective decisions and even lent him money.[1] It is therefore not surprising that Palmer, when he came to power, expected no control from this direction, and when he discovered in Lord Walsingham a Postmaster-General unwilling to be ignored his reaction was violent. He showed open contempt and opposition, writing to Pitt and suggesting that the appointment was a sinecure and should be abolished. He certainly in his pronouncements did not concede to that office a higher authority. Palmer had initially asked for appointment under the Treasury and acted as if he had such an appointment despite his clear knowledge to the contrary. On 12 October 1790 Palmer wrote to Walsingham informing him that

> "Mr Pitt... has made a purchase of my inginuity and judgement such as it is, and I am to act upon that judgment, and no other person whatever, subject if I do wrong to your Lordship's observations, and report to the Treasury."

He declared his appointment under the Postmasters-General to be nominal and that he was virtually a Treasury appointee. In this he declared he was merely following the pattern of Ralph Allen who was independent of Post Office control. He was continually to repeat this myth of Ralph Allen's independence despite the fact that he must have been aware of Allen's obligation to obtain the sanction of the Post Office Board for his decisions and to provide detailed financial information. Palmer's denial of Walsingham's authority not only completely ignored the reality of the situation, of which Palmer must have been aware, but was also taken despite the clear knowledge that Walsingham was favourably disposed to his plan.[2]

1. Ellis op cit pp 14,92

2. POR Post 1/15/60, Post 1/15/142; Post 96/21/66, Post 96/22/69; Post 97/5/32, Post 97/5/49-50, Post 97/5/137-39; BPP 1807(31) II 101 p6; Papers Relative to the Agreement...with Mr Palmer (1797) pp iv,2,6,Remonstrance p4.

Walsingham had been active in politics for 13 years prior to his appointment as Postmaster-General in 1787, holding several government offices and enjoying a reputation for hard work and efficiency. On retiring from the Postmaster-Generalship in 1794 he was promoted to the position of Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords which he held until 1814. Walsingham was an exacting but not unpleasant person to work with. He was said to be "courteous, gentlemanly and affable" and in his correspondence there is no suggestion to the contrary. He approved of the mail-coach plan and this was freely admitted by Palmer on several occasions. In 1788 Palmer admitted to being "happy under your Government and really obliged to you for your politeness & liberality", but the honeymoon was not to last long. Walsingham took the terms of his commission seriously declaring on one occasion that the appointment of joint Postmasters-General was

> "a sacred trust, for the due Exercise of which we are responsible and of which it is not in our Power to divest ourselves (even were we disposed to do so) without betraying as well as abandoning the Trust that is so reposed in us."

It would have been possible for Palmer and Walsingham to have worked together had the latter accepted the right of a general supervisory role by the Postmasters-General, but Palmer was unwilling to acknowledge any check to his powers, while Walsingham was unwilling to adopt the role of a mere cypher.[1]

John Palmer had many admirable qualities. He was perceptive and active and was at his best when touring the country arranging practical details, devising new coach routes, and negotiating with coach contractors. He not only had the ability of executing such work himself but also of selecting subordinates capable of showing the same enterprise as himself. Francis Freeling, Secretary to

1. POR Post 96/22/66, Post 96/23/8; Gentlemans' Magazine Vol LXXXVIII Pt I (January 1818) pp 82-83; Debates in Both Houses of Parliament in the Months of May and June 1808 Relative to the Agreement Made by Government with Mr Palmer (1809) p21; Ellis op cit p13.

to the Post Office from 1798 to 1836 and Thomas Hasker, Superintendent of the Mail-coaches from 1788 to 1818 were both introduced to Post Office service by Palmer. The exception was the person he appointed to act as his Deputy, Charles Bonnor. Palmer, often absent from London on business, and not a lover of routine paper work and office intrigue, required a sound faithful administrator in London to protect his interests. Instead he chose an unreliable, inefficient, crafty, double-dealing, spendthrift ex-actor who was a strong contributory factor to the mismanagement that occurred in certain aspects of the department and prompted Walsingham's attentions.[1]

Palmer's method of transacting business was diametrically opposed to that of Walsingham. He had little respect for, and felt little need of written records for the execution of many aspects of his plan. By 1790 there were in fact no written contracts with the coach proprietors who daily supplied horses and conveyed the mails upon whom the whole scheme depended. The agreement between Palmer and John Besant, supplier of the mail-coaches, had been drawn up in November 1786 but never signed. In December 1791 when Besant died the business passed to John Vidler but no contract to cover this change was drawn up. Such laxity in fundamentals was too typical of Palmer's way of conducting business and was anathema to Walsingham to whom correct administrative procedures and the minuting in detail of all decisions were essential. Board meetings were held regularly and minutes issued requiring information before sanction would be given. Matters were no longer sanctioned merely because they happened to be laid before the Board. Palmer's actions were scrutinised carefully and Walsingham did not always like what he saw. Vagueness led to investigation. Palmer who was used to sanction without question, when he felt it necessary to submit his plans for official approval at all, which was seldom, found himself bombarded with minutes from Walsingham requiring explanations.

1. POR Post 96/22/12, Post 96/22/59

Walsingham was also insistent that business passed through the Secretary of the Post Office "that every transaction of ours becomes by that means on Record, and can be referred to as an authentic document at any time." Palmer objected to these procedures and did all in his power to avoid compliance. In December 1789 he was protesting that

> "the duties of my employ, and the accommodation of the Public as now settled, cannot be kept up to by the business being transacted at a Board or if Acts of Parliament, Treasury Warrants, Precedents and old forms are to be resorted to 'ere I can act, or Boards to be held on the propriety of my regulations."

Not only was such a procedure opposed to Palmer's method of transacting business, but he felt that its very existence was a threat to that independence of action which he claimed to have received from Pitt and the Treasury. His standards of administrative efficiency would also not bear close scrutiny.[1]

Financial control appears to have been particularly lax. Palmer was clearly aware of this and this was possibly the main reason for his resentment of Walsingham's attempts to enforce accountability. The accounts for the year ending 5 April 1788 were not passed by Walsingham to the Auditors of Public Accounts until 1790, and then he was far from satisfied with their state, as salaries and the amounts paid for the carriage of mail had been arbitarily changed by Palmer without any form of sanction. The morning bills of charge for letters passing through the Inland Office in London were found to be in error to the extent of £500 for the year to 5 April 1788 and £591 18s 2d for the following year. On 19 October 1790 the Postmasters-General wrote to Pitt concerning the accounts of the Comptroller-General's department and "the Arrears and confusion in which they have been kept." Money issued for the payment of extra duty for letter carriers in the three quarters to October 1789 had not been paid to them by April 1790 and it was suspected that it had been misappropriated for the unauthorised establishment of a separate office for sorting newspapers. Vouchers generally were vague with dates omitted from receipts and

1. POR Post 1/15/253; Post 96/22/66; Post 97/5/20; Ellis op cit pp 16-19; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 13 p32

payments made without authority.[1] The account for guards' wages was a particular source of trouble. Palmer drew 13s a week for each guard but only 10s was in fact paid to them, the balance being kept in a fund for the purchase of uniform and the disbursement of sickness and superannuation payments. This practice had been condemned by the Parliamentary Commissioners who reported in 1788, on the general principle "that the same officer who incurs the Expense should not benefit by the management of it and by having a large sum always in his Hands to be issued how, when where and to whom he pleases." This account was also "without any Check or Control...and without sufficient Evidence of all the payments being actually made to the Parties." Despite this adverse report Palmer appears to have continued in the same manner until Walsingham obliged him to adopt the recommendations of the Commissioners that the guards should be paid from balances held by the postmaster in the post town from which they operated. After this was adopted the accounts of the postmasters were found in many cases to be credited with incorrect sums for the guards' wages, and as late as May 1792 Walsingham was complaining of errors in these accounts.[2] Palmer's dismissal also brought to light the case of Robert White, a Second Clerk at the Post Office who was encouraged, with Palmer's knowledge to fabricate vouchers to cover a claim for payments to guards amounting to nearly £400. The financial muddle in the department appears to have been to a considerable extent the fault of Bonnor who admitted "the want of keeping a regular account of all cash matters." Palmer described Bonnor's accounts as "perplexed" and "unsettled" in part because of"some very suspicious and alarming circumstances having occurred which he assigned as Reasons for their delay and Confusion." Palmer was referring to a mysterious burglary of papers from Bonnor's office in January 1788 and an equally mysterious fire, strongly suspected of being arson, in the same month.[3]

1. POR Post 96/22/64, Post 96/22/66, Post 96/23/17; Post 97/5/1, 14-21

2. POR Post 1/14/26-27; Post 96/22/66; Post 97/5/117, Post 97/7/211; PRO 30/8/186

3. POR Post 96/22/64, Post 96/23/63; BPP 1807(31) 101 II Appendix 10 p12; Debates in both Houses...(1809) pp 14-15,17; Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates Vol XI(1808) p199; Clear op cit pp 35-38

Palmer was of an independent disposition, unwilling to acknowledge higher authority, and this coupled with the low opinion that he held of the value of the post of Postmaster-General meant that he seldom felt it necessary to seek sanction for his reforms. This Walsingham could not allow and in December 1789 he was complaining of Palmer "refusing to obey the orders of the Board and to communicate to us any of his proceedings either before or afterwards." Palmer failed to seek sanction from the Post Office Board for contracts made for the carriage of mail, and failed to ensure that the journals which the Riding Surveyors were obliged to maintain were forwarded quarterly in accordance with Treasury instructions, in order that the Postmasters-General had some indication of how the day to day functioning of the inland mails was proceeding.[1] Specific projects undertaken without sanction included the setting up in November 1787 of a separate department to sort and despatch newspapers with 18 employees and a cost of £702 p.a., and an attempt to remodel the complete staffing establishment of the G.P.O. in Edinburgh in September 1790. When Walsingham heard indirectly of this latter project he ordered the immediate suspension of its implementation and told Palmer sternly that the Postmasters-General would "not suffer any alterations to take place in the Internal Regulations of the office or in the Management of the Revenue without our immediate sanction and Knowledge, because the ultimate responsibility of all that belongs to the General Post Office rests with us." These were not the only attempts by Palmer to alter staffing without sanction, despite the fact that he had been reminded in July 1789 that his powers extended only to the suspension of staff for neglect or disobedience and that even the Postmasters-General had no power over the staff establishment and salaries except with Treasury consent.[2]

1. POR Post 1/14/208-10; Post 96/22/66; Post 97/2/83, Post 97/5/399, Post 97/6/239; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix p72

2. POR Post 1/14/4-7, Post 1/14/28, Post 1/14/203; Post 1/15/63; Post 96/22/66; Post 97/4/3-4, Post 97/4/11b, Post 97/5/1-13

One unauthorised promotion by Palmer caused considerable discontent amongst the staff of the Inland Office. Outdoor staff (letter carriers) had little chance of promotion and could only expect menial indoor employment such as letter sorting. Higher supervisory staff were promoted from clerical grades. Palmer with a complete disregard for custom appointed Edward Johnson, a letter carrier, Inspector of Letters in the Inland Department in January 1787. It is clear that he used Johnson in a much wider executive capacity arousing considerable opposition in the Inland Office. In September 1790 Bonnor suspended several officers in the Inland Office for their opposition to Johnson's orders and the Postmasters-General were petitioned by the officers of that department "praying that they may not be superceded without any offence being charged against them, by a person so much their inferior and belonging to a different establishment." The Postmasters-General refused in February 1791 to agree to a new post of Surveyor of the London District and Inspector of the Inland Department created by Palmer with Johnson's appointment in mind. Johnson was very much the victim of the quarrel between Palmer and Walsingham, and also Palmer's habit of ignoring the feelings of subordinates, and it is clear that Palmer made enemies amongst established staff in the Inland Office not only from introducing outsiders but also because of his overbearing, almost dictatorial attitude especially towards staff suspected of loyalty to the Postmasters-General.[1]

In his quarrel with Walsingham Palmer resorted to defiance and insubordination, satisfied in his own mind of the support of Pitt and the Treasury, and convinced that in the final showdown it would be Walsingham who would prove expendable and not himself. On 12 October 1790 following the suspension of the changes in the Edinburgh office establishment, he

1. POR Post 1/15/58-60; Post 96/22/64, Post 96/22/66; Post 97/5/22-24, Post 97/5/123, Post 97/5/379; Ellis op cit p31

informed the Postmasters-General that if they

> "from mistake or ill advice shall send me any commands that I think may go to mischief instead of good I shall most certainly not observe them ... and if I apprehend ill consequences from any you may think proper to send to any of the Officers under me I shall take the liberty ... to contradict them"

Subsequently he practised a policy of ignoring minutes from the Postmasters-General of which he did not approve. He declined to initiate further reforms or lay them before the Post Office Board for consideration, and even resorted to actions designed to undermine the authority of the Postmasters-General.[1] In July 1788 in the absence of Palmer in Ireland, Walsingham had arranged with Wilson, a mail-coach contractor, to operate a service daily to Cheltenham while the King was there. Palmer, annoyed that Walsingham had encroached on what he regarded as his sole preserve, determined to teach him a lesson not to meddle with coach contracts again. He encouraged Wilson to send in an inflated account and then advised Walsingham that he had little option but to agree to it and that it was inadvisible to dispute the account in the courts.[2] Palmer also twice, once in October 1790 and later in February 1792, encouraged delay in the delivery of mails, at the same time trying to convince London businessmen that the delay was caused by interference by the Postmasters-General and consequently the usurping of his own powers. On the second occasion his plan was to use Sir Benjamin Hammett, the London banker and one of the principal creditors of Besant & Co,[3] coachbuilders and suppliers of patent mail-coaches, to organise a meeting of protest at the London Tavern on 15 February 1792 at which a resolution, hostile to the interference of the Postmasters-General with Palmer's scheme, and asking for increased powers for the Surveyor and Comptroller-General, would be passed. The plan however misfired. Palmer

1. POR Post 1/15/184-5; Post 96/20/44, Post 96/22/69; Post 97/5/55-56; BC 546.4/14385; BPP 1807(31) II 101 p38

2. POR Post 96/21/17; BC 546.4/14365, 546.4/14367; Debates in Both Houses...(1809) pp 14-15

3. See pp 227-30

entrusted to Bonnor for delivery to Hammett confidential papers to be read at the meeting. Bonnor who knew that he had largely lost Palmer's confidence, and would probably be replaced at the earliest oportunity, felt that his implication in Palmer's double-dealing, with the risks involved, ought to be rewarded. He therefore tried to blackmail Palmer into providing him with an annuity in return for his part in the plot. Palmer agreed if Bonnor would retire from the Post Office. Bonnor declined the offer and published the story of the engineering of the meeting and distributed it in pamphlet form.[1] Palmer's immediate reaction was to suspend Bonnor from his duties. On 28 February the Postmasters-General requested Palmer to indicate the reasons for Bonnor's suspension. Palmer chose to ignore the request. On 6 March, as no reason had been given, the Postmasters-General ordered that Bonnor's suspension should be lifted. Palmer refused however to allow Bonnor the key to his office and threatened his removal should he come there. For this disobedience Palmer himself was suspended. At this stage Pitt still had confidence in Palmer and would probably have attempted to patch up an understanding between the disputants. Walsingham and his fellow Postmaster-General Lord Chesterfield were however adamant. They had endured Palmer's flouting of their authority long enough and were determined to make it clear that either he went or they would resign. Bonnor conveniently passed to Walsingham some correspondence of his with Palmer revealing his double-dealing over the Cheltenham coach and his general lack of respect for the authority of the Postmasters-General. Pitt reluctantly agreed to implement a new establishment for the Post Office in which the office of Surveyor and Comptroller-General did not feature

1. POR Post 96/7, Post 96/14/7, Post 96/20/69, Post 96/22/64; BPP 1807(31) II 301 Appendix 6 pp 8-9; Charles Bonnor, Facts Relating to the Meeting Held on Wednesday last the 15th of February At the London Tavern...(1792); Ellis op cit pp 117-18, 120-21.

and retire Palmer on a pension of £3,000 p.a.[1]

There can be little doubt that Palmer's"dismissal" was justified. Walsingham entered office favourably disposed to the use of mail-coaches and had no intention of placing any unwarranted obstructions in the path of the extension of the project. In 1797 when giving evidence before a Parliamentary Committee looking into Palmer's claim for a continuance of his percentage, he was required to answer Palmer's charge of obstruction. Walsingham denied that he had interferred improperly with Palmer's control of the inland posts,

> "what we required was that what was done should be recorded, and should be done with the knowledge of the Board in cases where it did not require immediate despatch, and where it did, that Mr Palmer should report to the Board, both what he had done, and the reasons for doing it."

This was regarded by Palmer as an unwarranted intrusion on his supposed freedom of action. Palmer insisted on freedom for himself but was intolerant and resentful when others questioned his actions. His correspondence both with Walsingham and with subordinates shows at times intolerance and anger and he could be openly disrespectful of authority. It contrasts markedly with the firm yet correct manner adopted by Walsingham who sought always to justify his actions and counter Palmer's wild charges and outbursts. He had no wish to make an enemy of Palmer but was determined to see that he adopted the proceedures he had laid down as necessary. He knew that by doing so he was restricting the independence that Palmer had previously enjoyed but this he felt to be necessary if he was to fulfill the duties of his office. Palmer too was aware of the restraining influence that Walsingham might exercise and was determined to avoid this control if possible by subterfuge and if necessary defiance. Charles

1. POR Post 96/22/64; BC 546.4/14387; Debates in Both Houses... (1809) p27; Clear op cit pp 43-63; Ellis op cit pp 120-21

Long, who was Secretary to the Treasury from early 1791, was quite clear as to the reasons for the "dismissal" and its justification.

> "Mr Palmer objected to the Postmasters-General exercising any authority over him whatever; I frequently, in conversation with Mr Palmer, stated to him my conviction that if any attempt was made by the Postmasters-General to obstruct his plan, or throw any impediments in the way of improvement of it he might be quite certain such obstruction and impediment would be removed by Mr Pitt ... but I stated to him distinctly also my opinion that if his object was to change the constitution of the office, and to deny altogether the authority of the Postmasters-General Mr Pitt would not support him in carrying such intention into effect."

Palmer was clearly intent on denying Walsingham's authority and Walsingham equally firm that it should be recognised. They could not work in harmony and one of the combatants had to retire. Palmer by his impetuosity ensured that it was to be himself.[1]

Although we may feel the need to side with authority and support Walsingham in the correctness and firmness of his attitude to Palmer, we must not neglect to note the achievements of the Comptroller-General and the widespread regard in which he was held even following the revelations of his insubordinate conduct. He was given the freedom of eighteen towns and cities including York, Chester, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Liverpool and Edinburgh in recognition of the benefits to communication brought about by the introduction of mail-coaches. His native town of Bath honoured him by electing him mayor in 1796 and 1809 and returning him to Parliament as one of its M.P.s in 1801, 1802, 1806 and 1807. Palmer never felt any guilt for his actions and never saw the justification for his "dismissal". His retirement on a pension of £3,000 per annum was never acceptable to him and he was determined to have his percentage, representing his reward for devising the scheme. In August 1795 the Treasury refused to consider the restoration of his percentage stating that the £3,000 p.a. was "a just and full compensation for the services you have rendered." Palmer was however

1. POR Post 1/15/48-49; Post 96/7, Post 96/22/66; Post 97/7/13-14; Post 97/7/19-20, Post 97/7/111-2; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 13 p15; 1812-13(260) IV 735 p20

a determined fighter, prepared to pursue the matter through the courts and in parliament to obtain what he regarded as justice. It is a reflection of his popularity that he received the active support of parliamentarians despite the strong opposition of the Treasury and government. His claim was investigated by Parliamentary Committees in 1797, 1807, 1808 and 1813. By this date the amounts due to Palmer under his percentage were calculated to be £84,920 1s 6d in excess of the pension paid to him. The governments opposed to the payment were defeated consistently in the Commons from 1808 and eventually in 1813 a compromise was agreed. Palmer was to accept £50,000 in lieu of arrears, and a bill to authorise payment was passed. Few now sought to revive the issues which had led to his "dismissal", while the benefits bestowed by the mail-coach and its projector were clear to all. His achievements in the Post Office were hailed as "the means of augmenting the revenue, and extending the mercantile and commercial interests of Britain, in a very astonishing degree."[1]

Palmer promoted his mail-coach scheme within the Post Office for just over seven years but his achievements in this relatively short period are in many ways impressive. His energy is demonstrated in the way in which, despite considerable opposition from the officers of the Post Office, and uncertainties surrounding his own status, he had established a national network of coach routes by the Autumn of 1785. No fewer than 20 routes radiated from London[2] to serve England and Wales and by the next year routes had been pushed forward over the border into Scotland. In additional to his mail-coach operations, Palmer had as Comptroller-General a responsibility for all inland mail routes. Mail-coaches accelerated

1. POR Post 1/24/254, Post 1/25/130; BPP 1807(31) II 101, 1808(294) III 155, 1812-13(260) IV 735; Papers Relative to the Agreement... with Mr Palmer(1797) p12; Jerom Murch, Biographical Sketches of Bath Celebrities(1893) pp 114-15; Britton op cit pp 121-24; Ellis op cit Appendix 13 pp 164-66

2. Appendix 3 pp 370-71

delivery of correspondence along the route, which might well be more direct than that adopted previously and involve fewer stops. Thus the establishment of a mail-coach meant the complete recasting of the cross roads and branches that fed into and from the route. Palmer took such oportunities to effect improvements in these connecting services, and his achievements are impressive. Forty towns, previously without post offices now received them, while 380 other post towns, which before 1784 had only been served on three days of the week now received post on six. Speeds were much improved on the branches and secondary routes as well as on the main roads, with 201 post towns on the General Post routes and 320 served by the cross posts receiving an accelerated service.[1]

That Palmer's mail-coaches provided an improved standard of mail conveyance compared with that prevailing prior to 1784 was early conceded by his critics, though they claimed that an equally beneficial service could have been provided by accelerated mail carts. Their main sphere of attack was on the basis of cost and it was in this area that contradictory claims and counter-claims were publicised by Palmer and his opponents in the Post Office. The recipient of these was the Treasury, in whose hands the continuance or cessation of the plan rested, and thus the emphasis on profitability is easily explained. Palmer on his part claimed not only the superiority of the service he offered, but an increased profitability. This he found easy to demonstrate as both gross and net reveune showed what seemed to be a consistent and appreciable rise year by year (see table 18 p 112). Further he could point to a distinct improvement in the ratio between the gross and net product of the Post Office.

1. POR Post 96/23/36; Post 97/2/158; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 13 p36.

Table 18 - Post Office revenue in the United Kingdom 1777-92

Year ending 5 April	Gross product	% increase	Net product	% increase	Net product as a percentage of gross product
1777	£329,921		£158,575		48.1%
1778	£347,128	5.2%	£137,994	-13%	39.8%
1779	£372,817	6.9%	£139,248	0.9%	37.4%
1780	£387,092	3.8%	£136,409	-2%	35.2%
1781	£417,634	7.9%	£154,157	13%	36.9%
1782	£393,235	-5.8%	£117,325	-23.9%	29.8%
1783	£398,624	1.4%	£159,625	36.1%	40%
1784	£420,101	5.4%	£196,513	23.1%	46.8%
	Rise in postage rates under Post Office Act of 1784 of aproximately one third				
1785	£463,101	10.4%	£261,409	33%	56.4%
1786	£471,176	1.6%	£285,975	9.4%	60.7%
1787	£474,347	0.7%	£278,599	-2.6%	58.7%
1788	£509,131	7.3%	£296,980	6.6%	58.3%
1789	£514,538	1.1%	£318,610	7.3%	61.9%
1790	£533,198	3.6%	£331,179	3.9%	62.1%
1791	£575,079	7.9%	£355,999	7.5%	61.9%
1792	£585,432	1.8%	£366,959	3.1%	62.7%

Table 18 (continued)

Period	Increase in gross product	% increase	Increase in net product	% increase
1777-84	£90,180	27.3%	£37,938	23.9%
1785-92	£121,679	26.2%	£105,550	40.4%

Source: BPP 1807(43) IV 71

Such calculations as these however fail to take into account the rise in postage rates that occurred in 1784[1] with the introduction of mail-coaches.

Table 19 - Increase in postage rates - 1784 (England and Wales)

Distance	Rate for a single letter	
	Prior to 1784	Revised 1784 rate
one stage	1d	2d
two stages	2d	3d
beyond two stages and up to 80 miles	3d	4d
81-150 miles	4d	5d
over 150 miles	4d	6d

These rates increased the cost of sending a letter by about a third but failed to increase the gross product of the Post Office by anything approaching this amount (see table 18 pp 112-13). The rise in gross revenue for the year ending 5 April 1785 was only 10.4% and thereafter for the next two years grew very little. This was no doubt largely attributable to consumer resistance. The abuse of the franking privilege, which might have been expected to increase in such circumstances does not appear to have done so.[2] This was checked by measures taken in the 1784 Act to tackle the abuse by forcing users to write on the front of letters not only their name and address but also the date and post town from which they were sent, which made it more difficult to supply franked sheets of paper to those not entitled to use them. Previously some Members of Parliament had supplied signed sheets of paper to friends and relatives or even in bulk to business houses.[3]

Another factor that needs to be taken into account was the greatly increased cost of operating packet boats during

1. 24 Geo III 2nd session c37
2. See Appendix 3 pp370-71
3. 24 Geo III 2nd session c37

the American War of Independence, which adversely effected profitability in the period prior to 1784. Anthony Todd calculated the difference in cost between war and peace establishments on the packets at £20,000 per annum. To this must be added compensation for the loss of vessels by American, French or Spanish naval action, which was higher than in any previous conflict. Altogether 43 packets were captured and 19 others extensively damaged due to enemy action. It was these factors which forced up the cost of the packet service. The average yearly cost of maintaining the service in the seven years of peace preceeding 1776 was £31,121 and the seven years of peace following the war £46,030. We may therefore assume that if Britain had not been at war the average cost of maintaining the packets for the period 1777-83 would have been about £38,600 per annum, and this is substantially below the actual average of £90,476.[1] On the assumption of the cost being £38,600 per annum for the packets it is possible to arrive at an estimate of what profitability would have been in the period 1777 to 1783 had there been no war to distort the results.

Year to 5 Apr.	Gross product	Estimated net product[2]	% increase	Net product as a % of gross product
1777	£329,921	£169,333		51.3%
1778	£347,128	£176,192	4.1%	50.8%
1779	£372,817	£195,885	11.2%	52.5%
1780	£387,092	£197,344	0.7%	51%
1781	£417,634	£219,791	11.4%	52.6%
1782	£393,235	£201,018	-8.5%	51.1%
1783	£398,624	£206,902	2.9%	51.9%

A comparison of these figures with those shown in table 18 pp 112-13 will show clearly the effect of the American War of Independence in depressing profitability and the ratio of

1. See table 11 p55 and table 20 p116

2. Actual net product + difference between the actual cost of maintaining the packets and £38,600.

Table 20 - Cost of maintaining Post Office packet services 1770-90

Year ending 5 Apr		Year ending 5 Apr	
1770	£28,876	1777	£49,358
1771	£29,045	1778	£76,798
1772	£30,040	1779	£95,237
1773	£31,001	1780	£99,535
1774	£32,207	1781	£104,234
1775	£32,700	1782	£122,293
1776	£33,980	1783	£85,877

Year ending 5 Apr	
1784	£48,445
1785	£47,160
1786	£47,189
1787	£45,655
1788	£45,615
1789	£45,796
1790	£42,352

Average expense per annum		
	1770-76	£31,121
	1777-83	£90,476
	1784-90	£46,030

Sources: POR Post 1/11/52
Report from the Committee who were appointed to consider of the Agreement made with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix 8 p107, Appendix 14 p134.

net to gross profit. Although the figures for Palmer's period of office still show a better ratio of profit to cost, it is far from substantial.

The rise in postage rates and the higher packet expenses during the American War of Independence were only two of a much wider package of factors used by Palmer's opponents to throw doubt on the financial returns achieved in the period following the introduction of the mail-coaches. As early as December 1784 Anthony Todd was claiming a fall off in the revenue on the Bristol Road following the introduction of the mail-coach service. These representations were sufficient to persuade the Treasury to delay plans to extend mail-coaches to other routes until January 1785 in order to examine Todd's contentions. Treasury approval for the extension to other roads failed to silence Todd's opposition. In March 1786 he returned to the attack supported by the Postmasters-General, Lord Tankerville and Lord Carteret, who in a communication with the Treasury stated that "we are perfectly satisfied that this revenue has been considerably decreased by the plan for Mail Coaches." Lord Walsingham never attacked the plan on the grounds of supposed diminution of profitability, but he was of the opinion that when the additional costs in implementing the plan were taken into consideration, the Post Office gained little financial benefit as a result of it. By 1788 increased expenses resulting from the plan included £4,000 for maintaining mail-coach guards, £5,743 for additional staff in London and £3,000 for travelling expenses. firearms and timepieces amongst others.[1]

As part of the campaign to establish the profitability to be gained from adopting mail-coaches, attempts were made both by Palmer and Todd to calculate postal traffic on various

1. POR Post 1/15/61; Post 96/20/34; B&L B383 Acc No 32:1872 p236, Acc No 32:1873 pp 243-49; Ellis op cit p102

roads for equal periods before and after the introduction of coaches. Palmer's coach to Bristol started operations on 2 August 1784 and a comparison of the period May to July with August to October is possible (table 22 p 119). This comparison would appear quite valid as the period involved represented equal halves of the best summer weather, when travelling and therefore correspondence would be at its peak. A comparison of data for the period August to October 1783 and the corresponding period in 1784 is also possible.

Table 21 - Value of letters sent and received on the Bristol Road - August to October 1783 and 1784.

	Letters outwards from London	Letters inward to London
Aug - Oct 1783	£2,023 17s	£1362 7s 2d
Aug - Oct 1784	£2,397 9s 9d	£1637 2s 3d
Percentage increase	18.5%	27.5%

Source: POR Post 96/23/1

These figures suggest increases in revenue on the first route operated by mail-coach in the range 17.4% to 27.5% (average 21.9%). National postal revenue in the year ending 5 April 1785 was only 10.4% above that of the previous year (table 18 p112). This would suggest that the introduction of the mail-coach with the improved service, both as regards security and speed, had an attraction to the public, probably clawing back some of the letters that before August 1784 were being illegally carried by stage-coaches.

This seemingly limited success on the Bristol Road should not however hide the fact that increased postage rates applied from August. These of themselves ought to have raised revenue. Palmer himself was obliged to admit that the revenue was

> "not so much increased during the first two or three years of the Plan in consequence of the Opposition preventing the execution of various and necessary regulations which were not finished till the year 1787"[1]

1. POR Post 96/22/69

Table 22 - Value of letters sent and received - Bristol Road May to October 1784

A. Letters outward from London to:

Office	May to July 1784	Aug to Oct 1784
Bristol	£908-15-7d	£1080-19-7d
Bath	£451-10-6d	£538-1-9d
Chippenham	£45-6-9d	£53-19-6d
Calne	£15-17-9d	£21-17-3d
Marlborough	£30-13-4d	£35-0-0d
Hungerford	£22-12s	£31-14-3d
Newbury	£97-18-1d	£132-8-9d
Reading	£194-6-7d	£234-16s
Maidenhead	£65-10s	£94-13-5d
Hounslow	£15-19s	£30-11-11d
Devizes	£53-10-11d	£58-8s
Melksham	£16-1-2d	£18-0-3d
Trowbridge	£33-5-3d	£34-4-3d
Bradford-upon-Avon	£36-2-7d	£34-14-10d
	£1987-9-6d	£2397-9-9d
Percentage increase	20.6%	

B. Letters inward to London from:

Bristol	£585-5-5d	£697-14-2d
Bath	£337-14-4d	£370-11-6d
Chippenham	£38-0-0d	£35-8-5d
Calne	£12-9-3d	£18-3-7d
Marlborough	£25-10-9d	£33-15-11d
Hungerford	£15-16-9d	£21-3-10d
Newbury	£71-11-7d	£92-3-11d

Office	May to July 1784	Aug to Oct 1784
Reading	£140-19-2d	£169-12-2d
Maidenhead	£44-10-2d	£58-14-5d
Hounslow	£7-10-9d	£11-5-3d
Devizes	£44-18-10d	£52-8-1d
Melksham	£11-12-8d	£14-5-2d
Trowbridge	£32-19-6d	£32-19-2d
Bradford-upon-Avon	£25-5-8d	£28-16-8d
	£1394-4-10d	£1637-2-3d
Percentage increase	17.4%	

Source: POR Post 96/23/1

Several of the mail-coach routes opened in great haste in the summer and autumn of 1785 produced lower returns in the first few weeks of operation than had been achieved in a similar period before their introduction.

Table 23 - Value of letters carried after the introduction of mail-coaches on the Exeter, Chester and Portsmouth roads.

Road	Postal revenue		Increase or Decrease
London to	Period before introduction of coach	Period after introduction of coach	
Exeter via Salisbury	8 Aug to 20 Oct 1785	24 Oct 1785 to 5 Jan 1786	
	£1,462-7-10d	£1,305-17-4d	-£156-10-6d (-10.7%)
POR Post 96/23/60			
Chester	15 Aug to 10 Oct 1785	11 Oct to 6 Dec 1785	
	£5,840-6-3d	£5,813-12-6d	-£26-13-9d (-0.5%)
Portsmouth	27 June to 8 Aug 1785	9 Aug to 20 Sept 1785	
	£1,341-4s	£1,212-11-6	-£126-13-6d (-9.6%)
BRL B383 Acc No 32:1874 p340			

These figures were probably selected to discredit Palmer's plan and show it in its worst possible light. Mail would be expected to decline to some extent in the winter months and hence the comparisons are not altogether valid. The figures do however show that the mere introduction of mail-coaches was not a guarantee of a sudden spurt in postal revenue. The increase in postal revenue in the eight years following the introduction of mail-coaches was in fact 1.1% lower than that in the previous eight years. Profitability certainly improved and here a comparison of the eight years before and after 5 April 1784 shows an increase of

16.5% but this was to a large measure the result of the rise in postage rates. The rise in percentage profit on gross revenue at first sight looks impressive, from 46.8% in 1784 to 62.7% in 1792 but here likewise the rise in postage rates is the main factor. The mail-coach plan failed to live up to Palmer's predictions of increased profitability especially in the first few years. It did however provide an infinitely better service combining speed and security with improved frequency and coverage in many areas. This could not be achieved without cost. Lord Walsingham made a correct assessment when in October 1790 he declared that he could see no evidence of financial benefit in Palmer's plan though "we are ready to admit the great benefit of his plan for the acceleration and security of the mails."[1]

1. POR Post 1/15/61.

Chapter 4 - The Expansion of the Network

Throughout his service as Surveyor and Comptroller-General, Palmer had adopted the attitude that he was indispensible for the effective execution and administration of his plan, and that the Postmasters-General were merely political time-servers without the ability or practical experience to administer the Post Office machine. It was therefore vital for Walsingham, after Palmer's dismissal, to demonstrate that the service could be maintained and even improved. No expense was spared to this end. Officers were called on duty earlier and worked longer. Additional duty was performed by guards and superintendants to maintain regularity of transit. This ensured that deliveries of mail from the G.P.O. London for the 24 post days following 7 March 1792, the day of Palmer's dismissal, were on average more than 1½ hours earlier than the 24 post days prior to his dismissal.[1] Newspapers commented favourably on this marked improvement[2] and Lord Chesterfield writing from Bath on 22 April noted:

> "I do not find Palmer very popular here, or that his conduct has even caused surprise. The good Effect of our management has appeared here. Letters are delivered half an hour earlier than they used to be."[3]

Was however this flurry of activity following Palmer's dismissal a public relations exercise mounted regardless of cost to demonstrate that the Surveyor and Comptroller-General was not indispensible? The parliamentary committee set up in 1807 to investigate Palmer's claim to his percentage hinted that this might be so when in their report they emphasised the economy exercised by him and then pointed out that in the four years subsequent to leaving office average expenditure was £145,000 higher than in the four previous years.[4] The committee were

1. 8.56 a.m. instead of 10.28 a.m.

2. BC 546.41/14384 Walsingham Papers; POR Post 96/22/59; Report from the Committee who were appointed to consider of the Agreement made with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix 16 p136

3. BC 546.41/14384

4. BPP 1807(31) II 101 p2

correct in their calculations of the rise in expenditure but failed to analyise the full financial results of the Post Office for this period which suggest rather different conclusions.

Table 24 - Income and expenditure of the United Kingdom Post Office 1785-96

Period	Av. gross receipts p.a.	% change in av. gross receipts	Av. expenses in operating service p.a.	% change in av. expenses	% of gross receipts consumed by expenses
5 Apr. 1784-88	£479,602		£198,861		41.5%
1788-92	£552,062	+15.1%	£208,875	+5%	37.8%
1792-96	£670,430	+21.4%	£245,899	+17.7%	36.6%

Postage rates remained unchanged during the period 1784-97

Source: BPP 1812-13(260) IV 735 Appendix 7 pp 60-61

The rise in average gross revenue for the four years following Palmer's dismissal was 21.4% compared with 15.1% for the previous four year period, and although the expense of operating the service increased rapidly, a lower percentage of the gross revenue was expended in operating the service. These figures are all the more creditable if other factors are taken into account which in the period 1792-96 were forcing up expenditure but providing no additional revenue. The volume of franked letters and official correspondence was 20.9% above that of the period 1788-92 and the volume of newspapers sent through the post a massive 73.2% higher. Added to this were the additional expenses of operating services under war conditions from 1793.[1]

The credit for the maintenance and improvement in the service may in part be attributable to Lord Walsingham, though his term of office as Postmaster-General came to an end in 1794. Even more the credit must be due to the loyalty displayed to

1. Report from the Committee who were appointed to consider the Agreement made with Mr Palmer(1797) Appendix 26 pp 154-55. Average number of franks 1789-93 1,894,281 p.a., 1793-97 2,290,759 p.a. Average number of newspapers 1789-93 4,581,192 p.a., 1793-97 7,934,606 p.a.

the Post Office by its officers, many of them selected and approved by Palmer himself, who continued in service after his dismissal. A number expressed their regret to Palmer on his dismissal but none elected to follow him into exile. Two officers in particular ought to be mentioned as they held key positions and shouldered much of the burden that Palmer relinquished. These were Francis Freeling and Thomas Hasker whose salaries were substantially increased from 5 July 1793 to £700 per annum and expenses, reflecting their increased duties and responsibilities.[1]

Francis Freeling was a native of Bristol and first came to Palmer's notice when he held the post of Chief Clerk at the post office in that city. Palmer valued both his experience of the administrative proceedures within the postal service and also his organising abilities. He was employed by Palmer in establishing his earliest mail-coach services and was officially appointed by the Post Office as surveyor in April 1785 at a salary of £100 per annum and an allowance of a guinea a day when travelling on duty. His earliest official assignment was the regulation of the Bristol to Portsmouth cross mail-coach route which commenced running on 5 April 1785, the day of his official appointment. His versatility marked him out from the other surveyors appointed by Palmer and he was not given supervision of a region as they were, but was employed "generally over the whole kingdom, in the case of Illness or Surcharge of Business." In January 1787 Lord Carteret could report that he had

> "been now employed near two years in every part of the Kingdom and in every Duty of the office during which he has been constantly on the Roads with Postmasters and Contractors in continual anxiety and fatigue and acquitted himself with that acknowledged ability which highly entitles him to every regard." 2

His immediate reward was a rise of £50 per annum in salary and this with allowances brought him in a yearly income of around £400. Palmer clearly trusted him and used him as his deputy

1. POR Post 1/15/264; Post 96/22/65

2. POR Post 10/30B; Post 96/21/53, Post 96/22/6; Post 97/6/99; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 70 p72

in both London and the provinces. He despatched him to Edinburgh in September 1790 to reform the establishment and mode of operation of the Scottish head office, he made him responsible to a large extent for the correspondence with Bessant and Vidler, the mail-coach builders, and he was used by Palmer to transact personal and confidential business. Palmer's dismissal in March 1792 restored power once more to the Secretary's office. Anthony Todd still held the post of Secretary to the Post Office, but his advanced age of 76 made it necessary for him to have the assistance and support of a younger, but experienced man. This was provided by Freeling. Prior to Palmer's dismissal Freeling held the position of riding surveyor at £300 per annum. He was now appointed Principal and Resident Surveyor at £700 per annum, and as a perquisite the profits on newspapers franked to and from America and the West Indies worth about £1,200 a year. In March 1797 Todd retired on full salary and Freeling became joint Secretary, until the death of Todd in June the following year. The office of Secretary was one that Freeling was to fill with distinction until 1836.[1]

The second key figure in maintaining Post Office efficiency following Palmer's dismissal was Thomas Hasker, whose early career closely parallels that of Francis Freeling. Hasker was also employed in the postal service before coming into contact with Palmer, holding the position of postmaster at Petworth (Sussex) and Portsmouth. He was engaged to assist Palmer in October 1785 "in consequence of the innumerable blunders and mischief that were continually arising from the stupidity or the perverseness of the Deputies[2] in the management of the new constructed Bye Bags." In December 1788 he was recommended

1. POR Post 1/15/264; Post 10/30B; Post 96/22/45, Post 96/22/60, Post 96/22/66; Post 97/4/93; Charles Bonnor, The Proceedings and Correspondence, Relating to Certain Articles of Accusation... (1798) p vi; Kenneth Ellis, The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century (1958) pp 58-59, 122, 124

2. Provincial postmasters officially designated "deputy postmasters"

to the Treasury for appointment as Superintendent of Mails and Mail-Coaches at a salary of £100 and a guinea a day while travelling. His duties included ensuring regularity of service, instructing mail guards in their duties and assisting in the establishment of new services or the renewal of contracts, in all of which he travelled widely. On Palmer's dismissal his responsibilities and scope for initiative were increased, and from 5 July 1793 this was recognised when his salary was raised to £700 per annum plus expenses. Evidence of his administrative ability and the efficient execution of his duties are to be found in the smoothness with which the service operated during his term of office which did not expire until 5 July 1818.[1]

Under other circumstances it might be assumed that Palmer's natural successor ought to have been his Deputy Charles Bonnor, but he appears to have played only a minor part in the administration of the Post Office after his master's fall. His inefficiency, devious manner, unreliability and dishonesty were as well known to Walsingham and Chesterfield as they were to Palmer. Bonnor had been useful to the Postmasters-General in exposing Palmer's double-dealing and for this reason they felt an obligation to retain his services, appointing him Comptroller of the Inland Department at a salary of £700 per annum. He was not however allowed to assume Palmer's powers or prestigious position, and the promotion of officers like Freeling and Hasker to positions of equal status and greater power must have been regarded as an open slight. Bonnor's presence however proved to be an embarrassment to the Post Office. He was openly accused in pamphlets of long-standing debt, sale of positions in the postal service for his own profit and fraudulently obtaining money. In connection with this last charge a legal action was taken against him. To make matters worse Bonnor insisted in publicly airing his version in like manner. A reorganisation of the headquarters' establishment in 1795 provided the necessary

1. POR Post 1/15/264; Post 96/21/37, Post 96/22/6, Post 96/22/58; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 18 p138; 1817(146) XV 89

oportunity to dispense with Bonnor's services by abolishing his position and retiring him on a pension of £460 per annum.[1]

It is necessary at this point to try to establish the extent of the mail-coach network, and the rapidity of its growth. Most directories and roadbooks of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries contain lists of coaches and identify stage from mail-coaches, and these would seem an obvious source for such information. The use of these lists does however pose problems. Although purporting to be national guides, the majority of the lists were published in London and aimed at a London market. They therefore detail coaches departing from the capital for the provinces and largely omit reference to those services operating from one provincial centre to another. It is no coincidence that most copies of W. Lowndes, A Guide to Stage Coaches &c... are bound with The London Directory, Critchett & Wood, A New Guide to Stage Coaches, Waggons, Carts, Vessels &c... with the London Post Office Directory and The Shopkeeper's and Tradesman's Assistant with Kent's Directory. Information in "national" directories such as The Universal British Directory (1st edn 1791, 2nd edn 1793) and editions of Holden's Triennial Directory and Pigot & Co's London and Provincial New Commercial Directory and roadbooks such as Cary's New Itinerary are strong only on routes originating from London. Provincially published directories are of assistance for some centres such as Dublin, Edinburgh, Manchester and Bath where annual or near annual publication became the rule, but for many towns assistance is lacking or spasmodic especially before the 1820s and 1830s. This type of publication is also only as accurate and up to date as the energy and sources of intelligence of the publisher and editor allow it to be, as any researcher

1. POR Post 1/39/45; (C Bonnor), A Letter to Philip Thicknesse Esq by Charles Bonnor...to which is added Mr Thicknesse's Answer (n.d. 1792); (David Morice), Morice's Abstract Narrative of the Post Office Transaction between Mr Hepburn, Mr Bonnor then Comptroller and Himself(n.d. 1793?); Anon, A Narrative of a Transaction in the Controlling Department of the General Post Office(n.d.1793?); Charles R Clear, John Palmer (of Bath) Mail Coach Pioneer(1955) pp 81-87

who has used directories and checked the information against other sources such as rate books, will readily acknowledge. Thus in such directories details of new coach services may be late in appearance, slow to be deleted on withdrawal and liable to omission. Duplication of entries under various towns en route are not always easy to eliminate entirely, while stage-coaches only conveying mails for part of the distance are usually listed as mail-coaches for the entire length of their journey. Thus any attempt at building up a picture of mail-coach development from these sources alone would be subject to omission and distortion. Fortunately information on mail-coach services does not have to be based entirely upon such sources. Records of the British postal administration in this period are substantially complete and provide much information on the establishment and termination of provincial as well as London based services.[1] This can be supplemented, especially for the 1830s, by a number of lists of mail-coaches published in British parliamentary papers and reports.[2] From such sources it has been possible to draw up a list of mail-coaches and stage-coaches used to convey mails, which although lacking some detail, can be regarded as reasonably comprehensive.[3] It could be argued that the large concentration of detailed parliamentary material for the 1830s may make it easier to detect and record short-lived services in this decade than in the earlier period and so underrate the extent of such provincial services at an earlier date. There may be some

1. The most valuable groups of documents in this connection are Post 1 Treasury Letter Books, Post 6 Incident Bills, Post 10 Inland Mails, especially 10/24-5 Mail-coach Reports to the Postmasters-General 1793-94 and 10/26-7 Hasker's Mail-coach Letter Books 1794-96, Post 15/124-27 Dublin - Chief Secretary's Office Letter Books 1784-1829, Post 35 Postmaster-General's Minutes, Post 42 Secretary's Minutes, Post 96 Palmer Papers.

2. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98; 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix 1 pp 84-87; 1831-32(645) XVII 397 Appendices 3 and 4 p iv; 1831-32 (716) XVII Appendix 18 pp 338-39; 1835(542) XLVII 487 Appendix 1 p2; 1837(70) XXXIV Pt I 263 Appendix 23 pp 42-43, Appendix 26 pp 50-52, Appendix 51 p165; 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837-38(685) XX Part II 1 Appendix 45 pp 227-30, Appendix 50 p236; 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327

3. Appendix 4 pp 372-426

truth in this but the earlier period would appear to be adequately covered by the documentary records of the Post Office, and route network maps[1] that survive are not only a check on the comprehensiveness of the lists built up from other sources, but also emphasise the much more extensive network of provincial mail-coaches that existed by the late 1830s.

In the case of England and Wales the network will be considered in two sections, firstly those mail-coaches working from London to provincial centres, and secondly those provincial coaches working cross routes and branches and supplementing services on main coach roads.

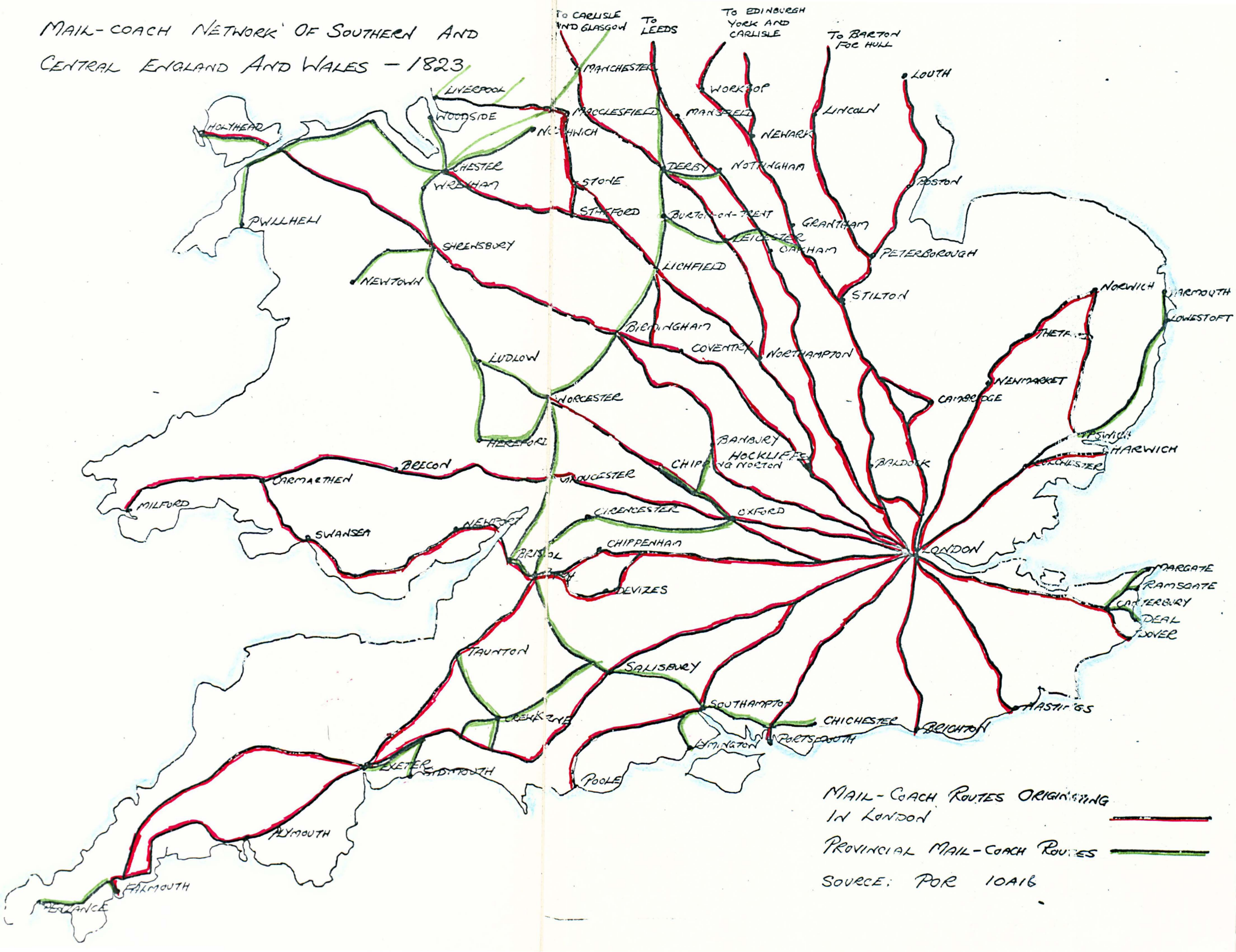
It was natural for John Palmer when developing the coach network to think firstly of replacing carts on the main post roads out of London, which still followed the pattern of the six principal routes established in the seventeenth century,[2] and all of these had been covered in a little over two years from the establishment of the first mail-coach service.[3] Palmer did not however neglect the needs of growing industrial and commercial centres, and direct mail-coach services were provided in addition to Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, while the importance of Glasgow was recognised by the provision of a connecting service from Carlisle as early as 1788 to allow a through route via either Manchester or Ferrybridge. Coaches departing from London were operating a network of 2773 miles by the end of 1785 and this had risen to 3175 miles by 1790.

1. Maps used: England & Wales - POR 10A6(1809), 10A12(1814), 10A16(1823), 10A21(1845); BPP 1837-38(658) XX Part II 1; Scotland PRO MPB 110(1813); BPP 1830(63) XIII 1; 1837-38(658) XX Part II 1; Ireland BPP 1837-38(708) XX Part I 517

2. See p 36

3. See pp 92-93, Appendix 4 pp 372-412

Mail-coach Network of Southern and Central England and Wales – 1823



Mail-Coach Routes Originating in London

Provincial Mail-Coach Routes

Source: POR 10A16

The early 1790s saw further new services to Chester, in addition to the existing route to Holyhead, to Lincoln and to Wisbech, and special services to accommodate foreign mails to Exeter (for Falmouth) and Dover. When this latter route was blocked by the armies of Revolutionary France, the foreign mail-coach was diverted to Harwich. In 1795 the total network mileage for London based coaches had reached 3489 miles. Thereafter the rise was at a more modest pace until a peak of 4253 miles was reached by the end of 1810. From then until 1835 can be regarded as a plateau. New services were attempted from time to time such as the direct service via Shrewsbury to Holyhead along Telford's new parliamentary route started in October 1808, but this eventually eliminated the service via Chester.[1] An attempt to establish a mail-coach to Chichester in 1808, and another on a direct route to Edinburgh avoiding York in 1825 were both short-lived failures attracting insufficient passenger traffic to sustain them. A feature of the late 1830s was the interest in establishing day mails to provide a second despatch from London to supplement the main 8 p.m. departure of mail-coaches. This was achieved by using existing stage-coaches to carry mails, and day mail-coaches were established to Birmingham (1837), Brighton (1838) and Dover (1839). But already by this period London based coaches were beginning to feel the effect of railway competition. Even if passengers could not as yet reach their destinations by rail, they were determined to travel as far as they might by this means. Mail-coaches for Exeter and Devonport were obliged to start from Hartley Row (1838) and later Basingstoke (1839), those for Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud from Twyford (1839) for Chester and North Wales from Hartford (Cheshire) (1838) and those for Carlisle and Scotland from Warrington (1837). Soon they were to be pushed back yet further or eliminated altogether. By the close of 1840 route network mileage from London had fallen to less than half that of five years earlier and substantially less than that of 1785.[2]

1. This service was established prior to the improvements made by the Holyhead Road Commissioners. See pp 149-50, 159.
2. See table 25 p132, Appendix 4 pp 372-80

Mail-coach Network of Northern England 1823

Mail-Coach Routes Originating in London

Provincial Mail-Coach Routes

Source: PDR 10A16

To Edinburgh
To Glasgow
To Port Patrick
Carlisle
Hexham
Newcastle
South Shields
Sunderland
Durham
Darlington
Stockton
Penrith
Keswick
Whitehaven
Appleby
Whitby
Scarborough
Malton
Thirsk
Boroughbridge
York
Lancaster
Preston
Blackburn
Bradford
Leeds
Beverley
Hull
Barnsley
Huddersfield
Rochdale
Bolton
Doncaster
Holyhead
Manchester
Liverpool
Glossop
Woodside
Sheffield
Bangor
Worksop
Retford
Louth
Chesterfield
Lincoln
Newark
Derby
Nottingham

Table 25 - Extent of the mail-coach network in England and Wales 1785-1840

	1785	1790	1795	1800	1805	1810	1815	1820	1825	1830	1835	1840
A. Coaches operating from London												
Total mileage of mail-coach services	2773	3175	3489	3752	3922	4253	4306	4353	4587	4318	4430	2197
Increase or decrease in route mileage		+402	+314	+263	+170	+331	+53	+47	+234	-269	+112	-2233
Percentage change		+14.5	+9.9	+7.5	+4.5	+8.4	+1.2	+1.1	+5.4	-5.9	+2.6	-50.4
B. Provincial and cross coaches												
Total mileage of mail-coach services	272	427	746	962	1182	2437	2154	2203	2159	2128	3471	4702
Increase or decrease in route mileage		+155	+319	+216	+220	+1255	-283	+49	-44	-31	+1343	+1231
Percentage change		+60	+74.7	+29	+22.9	+106.2	-11.6	+2.3	-2	-1.4	+63.1	+35.5
C. England and Wales - all mail-coach services												
Total mileage of mail-coach services	3045	3602	4235	4714	5104	6690	6460	6556	6746	6446	7901	6899
Increase or decrease in route mileage		+557	+633	+479	+390	+1586	-230	+96	+190	-300	+1455	-1002
Percentage change		+18.3	+17.6	+11.3	+8.3	+31.1	-3.4	+1.5	+2.9	-4.4	+22.6	-12.7

Source: Appendix 4 pp 372-412

Provincial and cross coaches were much slower to develop. By the end of 1785 only three such routes existed, those from Bristol to Hubberstone[1] through South Wales, Bristol to Portsmouth and Worcester to Ludlow, amounting to a mere 272 miles of route. Two of these were merely extensions of services starting in London, and further services of this type were to develop in the next five years such as the routes from Exeter to both Falmouth and Plymouth (1788). Two further types of provincial coach route were also to develop in this period. The first was the branch mail-coach an example of which was the Southampton to Lymington service branching from the London to Poole route. This particular service commenced operating in 1789. More important was the development of further cross routes connecting two main post roads already served by coach, of which the Bristol to Portsmouth had been the sole representative in 1785. The services from Birmingham to Bristol and Bristol to Oxford, both established in 1789 are further examples of this type of route. All three types were to develop further after 1790. Total route mileage was to increase rapidly up to 1810 when a network of 2437 miles existed. At this point a plateau was reached following the pattern seen in the routes radiating from London.[2] Two decades later however an advance in network mileage was to occur in the 1830s as the Post Office set up additional provincial services, many using pair horse coaches. In the period after 1835 services connecting with the railways advancing from London added, at least temporarily, to the total mileage. By 1840 the total provincial network mileage of 4702 miles exceeded the distance covered by London based services at their peak level. If the total route mileage for England and Wales as a whole is considered, the pattern is one of steady rise to c1795, a levelling out to c1805, a rise of 31.1% in mileage between 1805 and 1810, a further plateau to c1830, a rise from 1830 to 1835 of 22.6% and a substantial falling off in the

1. Departure point of packets for Southern Ireland. About 1791 the terminal point of this service was changed to Milford Haven.

2. For an explanation of this check in growth see pp 134-38

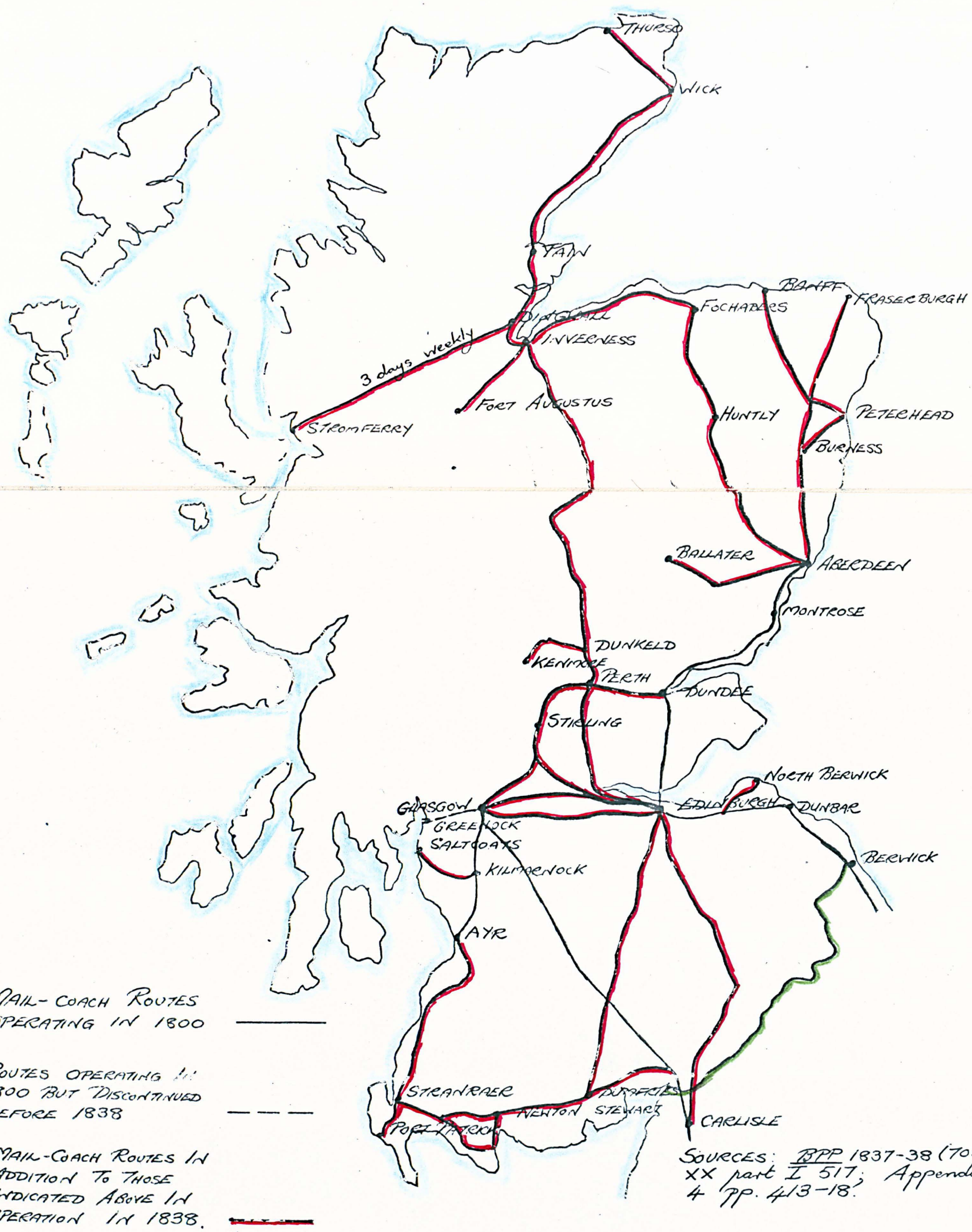
~~in the~~ next five years.[1]

In Scotland development of coach services lagged significantly behind that in England and Wales. A service between Glasgow and Greenock was inaugurated in 1785, a year before the first mails by coach reached Edinburgh from London, and three years before they reached Glaggow. By 1790 these three services had been joined by further routes extending south from Edinburgh and Glasgow to serve Ayr and Dumfries, and to provide with the new route from Carlisle to Port Patrick, connections with the packets sailing for Donaghadee in Ireland. Although the Glasgow to Ayr service was to survive, the coaches from Edinburgh to Dumfries and Carlisle to Port Patrick failed to attract sufficient passengers and were withdrawn. As only one new route, a short one from Glasgow to Paisley, was added in the early 1790s, the route mileage in 1795 had fallen by 159 to a mere 228 miles. A steady buildup was however to follow. The east coast mail-coach service was extended to Aberdeen on 1 August 1798, to Inverness in 1809 and to Thurso on 15 July 1819. Glasgow was connected to Edinburgh by mail-coach on 4 June 1805, with a second route added on 16 April 1810. A plateau was not reached until 1825. Thereafter the system remained fairly stable in total mileage until about 1835. During the five years that followed a substantial increase in routes occurred resulting in a peak mileage of 1770 miles by the end of 1840. Unlike England, Scottish mail-coach routes had been little affected by railway competition by 1840.[2]

Initially mail-coaches in England, Wales and Scotland paid no turnpike or public bridge tolls. Post riders and mail carts had always enjoyed this freedom and when mail-coaches

1. See table 25 p132, Appendix 4 pp 372-412
2. See table 26 p135, Appendix 4 pp 413-18

Scottish Mail-coach Services 1800 and 1838



Sources: BPP 1837-38 (708) XX part I 517; Appendix 4 pp. 413-18.

Table 26 - Extent of mail-coach network in Scotland and Ireland 1785-1840

	1785	1790	1795	1800	1805	1810	1815	1820	1825	1830	1835	1840
A. Scotland												
Total mileage of mail-coach services	24	387	228	360	548	1004	1106	1171	1339	1275	1232	1770
Increase or decrease in route mileage		+363	-159	+132	+188	+456	+102	+65	+168	-64	-43	+538
Percentage change		+1512.5	-41.1	+57.9	+52.2	+83.2	+10.2	+5.9	+14.3	-4.8	-3.4	+43.7
B. Ireland												
Total mileage of mail-coach services	-	271	523	468	953	1582	1935	1962	2098	2112	2682	2580
Increase or decrease in route mileage			+252	-55	+485	+629	+353	+27	+136	+14	+570	-102
Percentage change			+93	-10.5	+103.6	+66	+22.3	+1.4	+6.9	+0.7	+27	-3.8

Source: Appendix 4 pp 413-26

were introduced in 1784 it was claimed that this examption extended to them also, despite the fact that they carried passengers and were operated by coaching proprietors. To clarify the legal position exemption was provided by an act of parliament passed in 1785.[1] At the time, with the limited number of services operated, mainly on routes where the income of the turnpikes adequately covered outgoings, little protest was heard. By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century however opposition was becoming articulate. Not only had the route mileage increased appreciably, but on some routes where mail-coaches now operated turnpike revenues were barely adequate, and the trustees were clearly losing income because of the running of mail-coaches which might force stage-coaches off a route because of their opposition. The Post Office were also finding existing stage-coach proprietors willing to convey mails free, merely for the privilege of the remission of toll.

The reason why the issue came to a head about 1810 is clear, for in England and Wales provincial and cross mail-coach mileage increased 106.2% between 1805 and 1810 (1800-05 = 22.9%), and in Scotland for the same period 83.2% (1800-05 = 52.2%).[2] The result of extensive agitation was the setting up of a select committee to examine the question of the exemption of mail-coaches. The Post Office were apprehensive for an act of the Irish parliament in 1798 had removed the exemption of mail-coaches from toll in that part of the British Isles. In evidence to the select committee it was argued that mail-coaches because of their weight, narrowness of their tyres, their velocity and the frequency of service did considerable injury to turnpike roads.[3] Much more telling evidence was recorded in an appendix to the report which showed 26 turnpikes and a bridge, over which mail-coaches passed free of toll, where the income was insufficient to cover the cost of repair, and interest was unpaid on money borrowed by means of turnpike mortgages to bring the road into a good state of repair when it was first established. Of these trusts six

1. 25 Geo III c57
2. See table 25 p132, table 26 p135
3. POR Post 1/24/174

were in Scotland, five in Wales and sixteen in England.[1] The Post Office contended that the running of a mail-coach on a road was a good advertisement and attracted other traffic and income to it, and pleaded that if tolls were imposed it would cost the revenue £50,000 per annum and cripple development. Despite this the select committee declared in favour of the imposition of tolls, adding that "this Exempting of Mail Coaches is an invasion of private property by the Public, under the authority of law". Those public spirited landowners and others who had lent money to improve the roads should not be deprived of their rightful mortgage interest.[2] In the event the Act passed as a consequence applied to Scotland only, where all passenger or four wheeled vehicles conveying mails in the future were required to pay toll. In compensation the Post Office was allowed to charge an additional ½d on mail conveyed in such vehicles in Scotland. This additional fee brought in less than half the sum paid out in tolls (average income 1825-28 was £7,921 p.a., average toll payment £15,698 p.a.), and it was claimed by the Post Office that trustees attempted to charge full tolls on mail-coaches but commuted those on stage-coaches at a lower rate.[3] The toll imposition it was claimed would cripple development, as the Post Office would be reluctant to incur the extra expense necessary to operate mail-coaches.[4] Such Post Office protestations may have had little validity for in Scotland only two routes were discontinued in 1812 and the mail-coach network in 1815 was 10.2% above that of 1810, and was to continue to rise steadily in the next decade.[5] In England and Wales, the Treasury warned the Post Office to cease expanding its use of stage-coaches for mail conveyance and to reduce such services then in use. The Post Office named ten services which it had

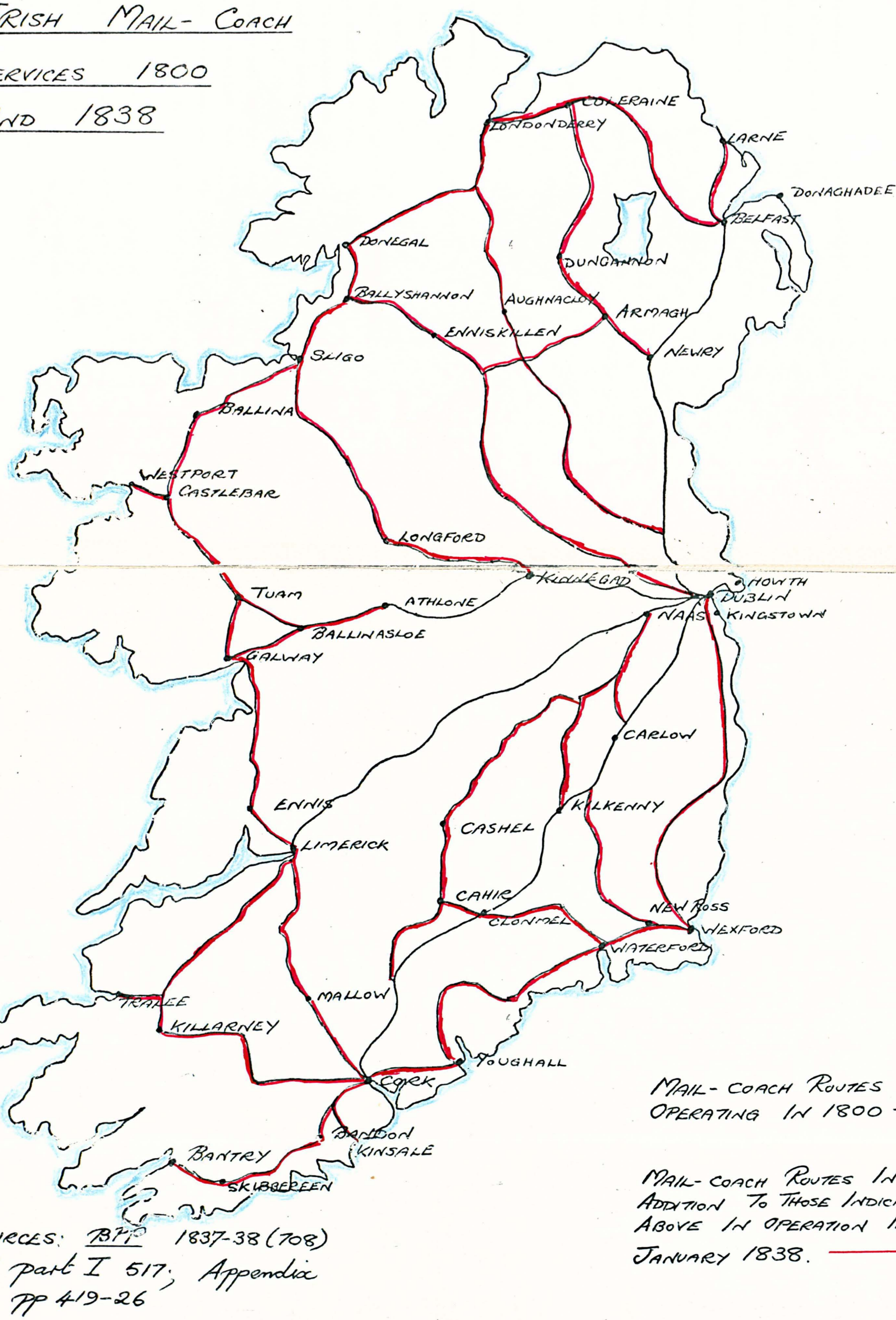
1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 Appendix 4 pp 55-82
2. POR Post 1/24/174; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p4
3. The Post Office made itself responsible for the payment of turnpike tolls thus in effect placing the proprietors of mail-coaches in the same position as previous to the passing of the Act.
4. BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 41 pp 248-53, Appendix 44 p269
5. See table 26 p135

recently discontinued or intended to discontinue, as a result of the Treasury representations but half of these were back in operation again by 1814. Certainly the provincial route network of mail-coaches fell by 11.6% between 1810 and 1815, but this is a modest fall and represents more the attainment of a plateau level than a determined attempt at a cutback of services.[1] There was certainly no "drastic reduction by the Post Office in the number of mail coaches in use" as one writer has contended.[2]

The success of mail-coaches in England attracted the attention of the Irish Post Office as early as October 1785 when a proposal for a Dublin to Cork service was considered although in the event no action was taken. John Palmer visited Ireland early in 1788 to negotiate for improved communication between the north of Ireland and Scotland, and it is likely that the question of mail-coach services was raised at this time. One of the main problems giving rise to concern in the Irish Post Office was "those Gangs of Villains who infest every road leading to Dublin", and in March 1786 it was agreed that the cost of using coaches would be little more than the expense of additional precautions necessary to improve the construction and adequately guard the mail carts then in use.[3] The first mail-coach services were commenced on 5 July 1789, one route extending north from Dublin to Belfast and one south to Cork. Further immediate expansion was impeded by the low volume of passenger receipts and the deplorable condition of many sections of Irish road, which in its turn resulted in demands for higher rates from coach contractors. Despite this a service to Limerick was inaugurated in 1791 and one to Galway in the following year, increasing the route mileage to 523 miles. No further extensions occurred in this decade and the Galway service was contracted in 1796 to Ballinasloe and in 1799 to Athlone. From 1800 however a steady policy of route extensions was followed and mileage rose from 468 miles in that year to 2580 miles in 1840, though in the period

1. POR Post 1/24/326
2. A.R.B. Haldane, Three Centuries of Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) p89
3. POR Post 15/154/62, Post 15/154/150; Post 96/22/69

Irish Mail-Coach Services 1800 And 1838



Mail-Coach Routes Operating In 1800 ——

Mail-Coach Routes In Addition To Those Indicated Above In Operation In January 1838. ——

Sources: BPP 1837-38 (708) XX part I 517; Appendix 4 pp 419-26

1820-30 expansion was on a modest scale and between 1835 and 1840 route mileage fell slightly. As with Scotland railway development was minimal by 1840, although the Dublin to Kingstown mail-coach had ceased to run in 1834 and the English mails were conveyed by the recently opened railway between these two towns.[1]

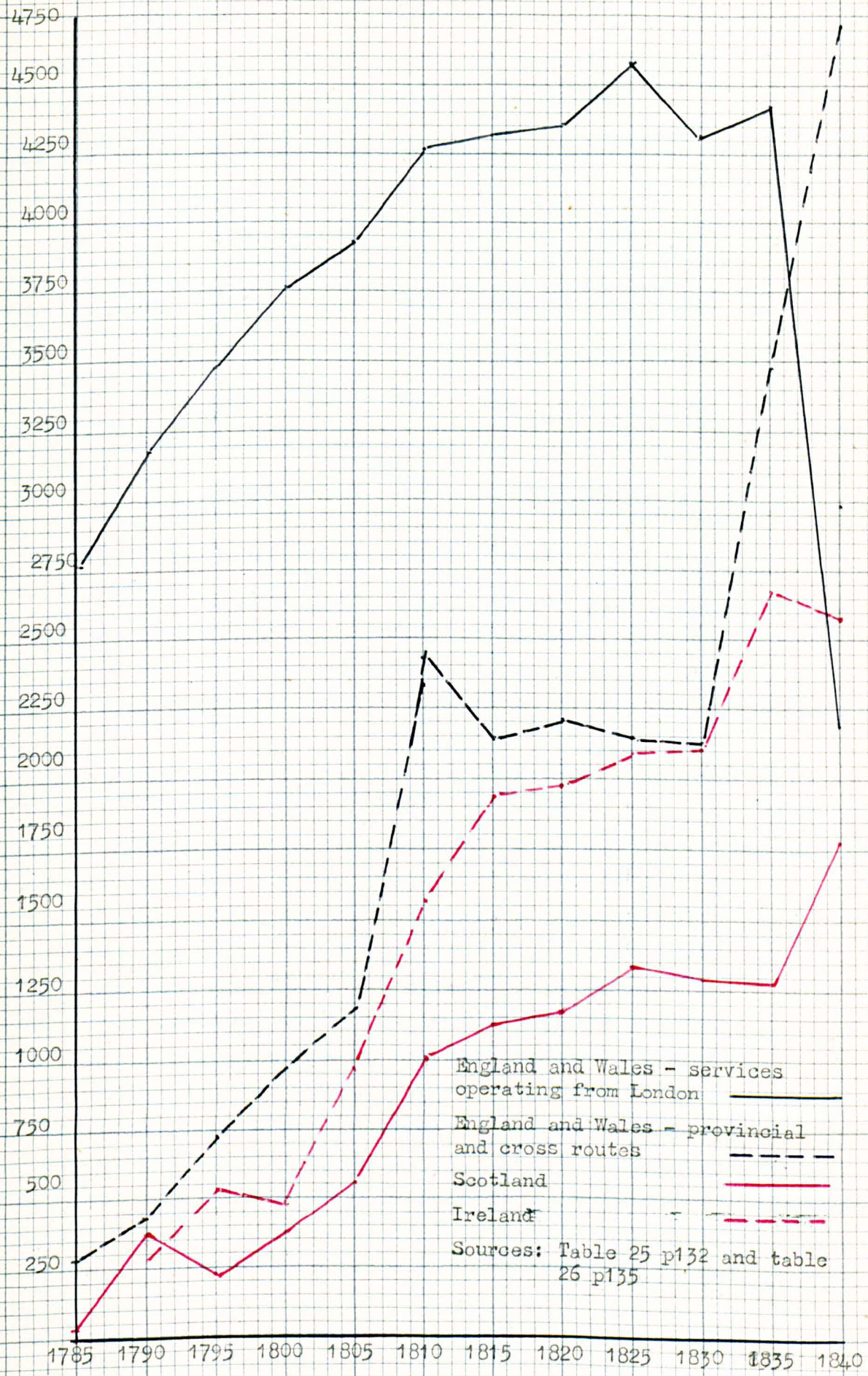
A peculiar feature to Ireland, which supplemented the coaching services, was a considerable network of two and four wheeled cars. The establishment and expansion of this system was due to an Italian emigrant Charles Bianconi who put his first outside "jaunting car" on the road in 1815 between Clonmel and Cahir. It carried six persons, three a side facing outwards. To provide additional revenue he made a private agreement with the postmaster of Cahir to carry the branch mail for him at half the fee he received from the Irish Post Office for the same work. The high cost of coaching in Ireland, the infrequent services and the sparse network gave Bianconi oportunities to expand, and with lower costs he could tap markets that coaches were unable to. By the end of 1825 his cars were operating a network of 1170 miles daily. Bianconi's cars were operated by reliable staff to a fixed timetable using vehicles specially built for the purpose in his own workshops. By 1832 mail was being carried by cars on 48 routes at a total distance of 972 miles and by 1838 79 routes were operated carrying mails. No similar development occurred in any other part of the British Isles, and the British Post Office was resolute in its determination not to allow passengers and parcels to be carried on mail carts generally on grounds of security and timekeeping.[2]

The expansion of mail-coach services from 1784 to 1840 closely parallels a similar increase in stage-coach route mileage. No researcher has to date attempted a detailed national analytical study of stage-coach growth, so direct comparison cannot be made with the growth rates shown in tables 25 and 26. Such a study

1. See table 26 p135

2. BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 19 pp 340-42; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 24 pp 45-46; 1857(2195) IV 65 Appendix J p61; M. O'C. Bianconi and S.J. Watson, Bianconi, King of the Irish Roads (Dublin 1962) pp 57, 67, 88

Mail-coach network - route mileage 1785-1840



has however been carried out for stage-coach services in South Hampshire[1] which provides some material for comparison.

Table 27 - Growth of stage and mail-coach services 1784-1839

A. South Hampshire

	1784	1798	1812	1823	1830	1839
Number of weekly coach movements inwards and outwards	1026	1412	1506	1560	2064	2802
Increase in the number of movements	462	386	94	54	504	738
Percentage increase	81.9%	37.6%	6.7%	3.6%	32.3%	35.8%

B. England and Wales - Mail-coach network mileage

Total network mileage	122	4477	6539	6737	6446	8297
Increase in mileage			2062	198	-291	1851
Percentage increase			46.1%	3%	-4.3%	28.7%

Sources: Freeman op cit p270; Appendix 4 pp 372-412

Freeman's analysis of the coaching data for South Hampshire led him to the conclusion that for this region of the United Kingdom the periods of rapid growth were the last decade of the eighteenth century under the stimulus of the introduction of mail-coaches, and the late 1820s and 1830s. Between 1798 and 1823 services showed little expansion, and this he attributes to the inhibiting effects of the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath. In support of this he cites the high levels of animal feed during the War, and the military demand for both horses and feed which would have been factors raising costs substantially. In the immediate post-war period he regards the collapse of farm prices, especially in arable areas, and general economic depression in trade as factors working against expansion. Lower feed prices would however have lowered coach

1. M.J. Freeman, "The Stage-coach system of South Hampshire 1775-1851", Journal of Historical Geography 1 (1975) pp 259-81

proprietor's costs and might well be regarded as a factor likely to encourage the expansion of services, while industrial and commercial recovery is to be noted from the early 1820s. Although mail-coach network milæage in England and Wales in the period up to 1810 does not conform to the pattern Freeman advances, this is largely because of its later start and the rapid expansion of services in the early years. It does however correspond very closely in the second decade of the nineteenth century with its lack of expansion. Freeman however sees expansion once more taking place from the mid 1820s whereas the data on mail-coaches suggests a longer period of stagnation and little increase until the early 1830s. These differences are not surprising because we are comparing data for stage-coaches from a limited region with national data on mail-coaches. The decision to expand mail-coach services might also depend on different criteria than those used by stage-coach proprietors. It must also be remembered that mail-coaches constituted only a small percentage of all coaches on the road.

Bagwell[1] has also published some figures in an attempt to gauge stage-coach expansion. On the basis of calculations made for ten main English and Scottish provincial coaching centres he has estimated that between 1790 and 1836 the number of stage-coach departures increased eightfold. These estimates are based on directory information which for such calculations is not completely reliable. Early directories, especially those published in London and claiming a national coverage such as the Universal British Directory are naturally patchy in their comprehensiveness and accuracy. The 1791 edition of this directory lists under Birmingham only coach services operating to London and the information is obviously lifted from a contemporary London coaching guide. That other services existed is certain. Gale and Martin's Sheffield Directory(1787) lists a daily service to Birmingham and both Holmes' Manchester and Salford Directory(1788)and Lewis's Manchester and Salford Directory of the same year list Manchester to Birmingham coaches. The Bristol to Birmingham mail-coach established in 1789 is also omitted. Later national directories

1. Philip S Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) pp 43-45

are clearly much more detailed, but in their attempt to provide a comprehensive picture for their readers duplicate services extensively in their lists. These are not always easy to identify and eliminate and can easily lure researchers unwittingly to inflate the volume of traffic above its true level.

Some guide to the true increase in the volume of coaching traffic can be obtained from the figures of revenue from stage-coach mileage duty. The use of these is however complicated by frequent changes in the rates and even the basis of charging the duty. Calculations of the percentage increase in the yield per annum for periods when the same rate applied can however be made (table 29 p 144). They suggest that in no period between 1789 and 1835 did the rate of annual increase exceed 5% and for long periods it barely reached 1%. Figures for the number of stage-coaches licenced also suggest a modest rate of growth.

Table 28 - Number of public coaches licenced (excluding Ireland) 1810-35

Period	Number of coaches	Source
Average 1810-14	1331 per annum	BPP 1830(868) XXV 225
Average 1825-28	2942 per annum	Ibid
1835	3036	Robson's London Directory (15th edn 1835)
Rate of increase 1810-35	126.1%	

Figures for the period prior to 1810 are not available but the rise in coach operation for South Hampshire for the period 1784 to 1812 suggested by Freeman is only 46.8% while that for mail-coach mileage in England and Wales from 1790 to 1810 is 85.7%. The mail-coach mileage increase for this period must be higher than that for coaches as a whole because the mail-coach system was still at a stage where it was building up its network in 1790, a process which had started only a little over five years earlier. All these calculations suggest that Philip Bagwell's figures, based on directory material, may be a considerable overestimate.

Table 29 - Revenue from stage-coach mileage duty 1789-1840

	England and Wales			Scotland		
Year	Total duty receipts	Increase in receipts	% increase per annum	Total duty receipts	Increase in receipts	% increase per annum
1789	£52,416			£3,099		
1796	£56,641	£4,225	1%	£3,264	£165	0.7%
1798	£104,453			£6,037		
1804	£122,585	£18,132	2.5%	£6,989	£952	2.6%
1806	£144,675			£10,790		
1815	£210,630	£65,955	4.6%	£12,978	£2,188	2%
1817	£249,519			£15,147		
1821	£261,558	£12,039	1%	£18,044	£2,897	3.8%
1823	£325,988			£19,835		
1830	£389,709	£63,721	2.4%	£28,895	£9,060	6.5%
1835	£474,236	£84,527	4.3%	£35,611	£6,716	4.6%
1840	£316,331	-£157,905	-6.6%	£26,263	-£9,348	-5.3%

Source: BPP 1857(2199) IV 65 Appendix 24 pp liv-lv

Note: Substantial changes in rates of duty were introduced in 1797,1804,1815 and 1822.

An examination of coaching information contained in various editions of Cary's New Itinerary suggests that in 1810 only 11.7% of all long distance coach routes out of London were mail-coach operated, and this percentage had fallen by 1831 to 5.1%.[1] A calculation based on the data collected by Bates[2] suggests that in 1836 mail-coaches constituted 8.8% of all long distance coaches departing from London and 5.7% of all provincial coaches. Stage-coach operators had a number of advantages over their mail-coach rivals. Mail-coaches were obliged to travel at times dictated by the needs of mail transit which were often not those most convenient for attracting passengers. Further, the advantages of toll remission were often more than offset by the lower total passenger receipts as the Post Office very strictly limited the number of passengers that could be carried. The Post Office seldom duplicated services and thus once a network of mail-coach routes had been established out of London, stage-coaches were free and often better suited to accommodate the expansion brought about by the increasing needs of the public to travel. In Ireland mail-coaches represented a larger proportion of the coaching trade because of the lower volume of passenger traffic available and also the competition with stage-coaches afforded by the cheaper two and four wheeled cars which operated an extensive passenger network. In 1825 21.3% of all coaches operating out of Dublin were mail-coaches and for 1834 the figure was 27.1%.[3]

The ability to develop a network of mail-coaches was dependent upon the maintenance of roads in a high state of repair. Virtually the entire length of all the main post roads from London had been turnpiked as early as 1750 and the period between

1. J. Cary, Cary's New Itinerary or an Accurate Delineation of the Great Roads...(4th edn 1810, 9th edn 1821). For intermediate dates the percentages are: 1812 - 8.9%, 1815 - 7.7%, 1817 - 6.8% and 1819 - 6.5%.

2. Alan Bates, Directory of Stage Coach Services 1836 (Newton Abbot 1969)

3. The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack (Dublin 1825) pp 208-12; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834) pp 52-55

1751 and 1772 was to see the height of turnpiking activity. By 1772 58.7% of all turnpikes had been established and by 1792 this had risen to 65.8% covered by no fewer than 600 trusts.[1] Although considerable improvements in road conditions were achieved as a result of the turnpike movement, a turnpike was not however ipso facto a good coaching road. No major concepts in road engineering were developed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and how effectively the road was drained and the surface maintained depended upon the skill and motivation of the man appointed as surveyor, the encouragement he received from the turnpike trustees and the volume of traffic using the road which dictated the amount available for expenditure on materials and labour. The condition of turnpikes was therefore variable. In the case of a number of roads Palmer found it necessary to negotiate improvements before a mail-coach route could be established. In connection with the impending establishment of the London to Hubberstone service an advertisement was placed in The London Gazette of 15-18 October 1785 announcing that some resolutions had

> "been entered into at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace held at Swansea, by the Justices and other Gentlemen assembled, for altering, repairing and perfecting the Roads for the Accommodation of the Mail in every Manner in their Power."

The start of the service by way of Bristol was delayed for nearly a month while the work was undertaken.[2] Some other surveys of routes, aimed at encouraging trustees to effect improvements, appear to have been commissioned by Palmer at the period when he was first establishing the mail-coach service. Thomas Gray of Nottingham, a coach contractor, undertook work for Palmer in 1786 concerned with the survey of the roads north of Nottingham, and a Mr. Ainsley presented an account in October 1793 for survey work undertaken on the Carlisle to Sanquhar road on Palmer's orders.[3] Often road conditions were at

1. William Albert, The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840 (1972) pp 42-45. The figures quoted above refer to England only.
2. The London Gazette No 12686 27 Sept-1 Oct 1785, No 12691 15-18 Oct 1785, No 12694 25-29 Oct 1785
3. POR Post 10/24/115; Post 96/13/1, Post 96/21/53

their worst by the early spring and on 6 March 1795 Thomas Hasker was reporting to the Postmasters-General that "the rot is to a great degree getting out of the roads and they are in most parts recovering their hardness." He added however that there were "in many places very deep holes which obliges the coachman to drive rather slower than they used to do over such spots, and where they do not see them they are often attended with accident."[1]

The Post Office enjoyed the right of all travellers to indict highway authorities who did not maintain their roads in good order, and clearly a complaint from this source would bear considerable weight with the County Justices of the Peace. Often the threat of such action would be sufficient to spur turnpike trustees to take effective action. Juries were however inclined at times to be unsympathetic with attempts to indict road authorities and a bill of indictment on a section of the road near Wisbech was rejected in February 1793 despite the fact that "in many places there are holes two feet deep, through the metal to the natural soil." This section of road was exceptional only to the extent of its deficiencies. The trouble was much more generalised and in the same month it was declared that "Roads never were in such condition, and every exertion...must be made to get them put into good repair the ensuing Spring." Complaints and indictments are numerous in these early years of the mail-coach network and although they do not entirely cease even in the 1830s they are much fewer in number and Mail-coach Superintendants were more inclined to praise than to blame the state of the roads.[2] In April 1811 Thomas Hasker freely admitted that if the turnpike system was to cease, mail-coaches would need to be withdrawn. Charles Johnson, his successor, in June 1819 expressed the opinion that most roads might be improved but few were so bad that they needed indicting. He was however critical of

1. POR Post 10/26/121

2. POR Post 10/24/30, Post 10/26/121, Post 10/26/170, Post 10/26/282, Post 10/26/285; Post 35/9/275, Post 35/23/258

unintelligent methods of repair and the wastage of materials that he had witnessed. He added that indictment had been little used in the past few years as the Postmasters-General had thought it not right to press "during this season of agricultural distress." Nine years later William Griffiths, a mail-coach inspector with twelve and a half years service, giving evidence before a parliamentary select committee, could comment on how greatly roads had improved since his appointment, adding that "there are not those rough stones which there used to be about a road." Confirmation of this was given by William Chaplin, an important coach contractor, who in his evidence to another select committee in 1827 referred to "the superior management of the roads" which had replaced "the large stones and bad state of the road" by a system of "almost pulverising the stones" greatly reducing wear and tear and affording a more comfortable and swifter journey.[1]

To about 1810 the Post Office had in the main been more concerned to enforce their legal right of passage along the roads than to contribute to their upkeep and improvement. The government were equally reluctant to involve themselves in road construction except out of military necessity such as the system of Highland Roads started by General Wade in Scotland. This attitude was to change however to one of active encouragement and participation in major improvement schemes. When in November 1808 the solicitor to the promotors of the Highgate Arch scheme had approached Thomas Hasker, he reported on the meeting,

> "I gave the Gentleman no encouragement from the office altho' they wish much for your promoting or sanctioning their plans, but told them that it was the custom of the office to follow improvement not to make them when quite out of their jurisdiction."

Francis Freeling endorsed this frosty response. Only two years later however on 20 December 1810 a meeting of the promoters of the New North Road from the City to Potters Bar was chaired by Thomas Hasker, and votes of thanks were recorded to "the

1. BPP 1810-11(212) II 707 p22; 1819(509) V 339 pp 11-12; 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 82 p443; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 7 p43

Right Honourable, and Noble the Post-Masters General, for the unsolicitated and liberal patronage they have conferred on this Measure" and to the chairman "for the valuable personal and official assistance...rendered in the formation of the Plan." This assistance afforded by the Post Office included surveys and plans made at their expense.[1] This was to be a pattern frequently followed in the next two decades. The Post Office promoted the survey of major post roads at their own cost and encouraged trustees to adopt the improvements suggested. Government financial aid was frequently available where capital could not be raised otherwise.[2] This partnership of Post Office survey and government finance was to be responsible for a considerable number of road improvement schemes. The surveyor and engineer most frequently employed for such schemes was Thomas Telford.

Telford's name is particularly associated with extensive improvements to Highlands communications in Scotland and the roads to Holyhead, in both cases carried out with extensive government finance. The latter scheme was of particular interest to the Post Office and mails benefitted greatly from the improvements made between 1815 and 1830 on the roads from London to Holyhead via Shrewsbury and Chester to Holyhead. Pressure to initiate government action was brought by Irish M.P.s who since the passing of the Act of Union in 1800 had been obliged to travel to Westminster over roads built and maintained in a very inadequate manner.[3] Pressure was also exerted on the Post Office by Irish M.P.s, who complained of delays in correspondence and demanded a direct coach to Holyhead via Coventry, Shrewsbury and Llangollen in addition to the existing service via Chester and the North Wales coast.

1. POR Post 10/1/220; Post 35/7/196. This change in attitude by the Post Office is probably connected to some degree with the agitation against exemption of mail-coaches from toll.(see pp 134-38).

2. Turnpike trusts could from 1817 receive financial assistance from the Exchequer Loan Commission set up in that year. See Albert op cit pp 111-13.

3. Mervyn Hughes, "Telford, Parnell, and the Great Irish Road", Journal of Transport History Vol 6 No 4 (November 1965) p199

The Post Office was extremely reluctant to initiate this service and informed John Foster, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, that on "established principles" they would not have contemplated such a service because of the expense and "particularly in the Winter from the bad state of the Road and the danger from unguarded precipices". They did eventually agree to extend their Shrewsbury via Oxford service by way of Llangollen from 5 October 1808 despite the narrowness of the road and the unrailed precipicies which made the journey dangerous after dark.[1] The new mail-coach to Holyhead was not however to solve the problem. The state of the road through Wales delayed the coach, and despite the fact that a scheduled speed of 6 m.p.h. was all that was expected, in the 85 days ending 27 March 1810 the coach was one to five hours late at Holyhead 71 times and several very serious accidents occurred. It was not until government finance to improve the road started to flow from June 1815, and an effective board of commissioners was set up that Telford, as engineer to the commission, could adopt the improvements that his earlier surveys had suggested. With road improvement came in 1816 the long petitioned for direct service via Coventry and an immediate reduction in journey time from 41 to 38 hours. By 1830 £730,000 of government money had been spent on improving the roads, replacing the ferries at Conway and over the Menai Straits, and building an entirely new road across the Isle of Anglesey. By 1831 the mail-coach was completing the journey in just 28 hours, a saving of 13 hours on the time taken 15 years earlier. To help finance the heavy expenditure on the bridges on this route an extra penny was charged on each letter conveyed across the Menai Straits from 10 October 1819 or across the Conway Estuary from 28 February 1821, and already by August 1831 £67,385-7s had been raised for the Treasury by this means.[2]

Telford's work on the Holyhead Road and improvements carried out to the communications in the Highlands was controlled by

1. POR Post 1/23/11-16; Post 30/6/E321L/1808

2. POR Post 1/36/91; BPP 1819(217) V 121 p10; 1819(548) V 157 p41; 1831-32(188) XVII 493; Hughes op cit pp 200-01, 206-07

government appointed commissioners and the Post Office played a less active part. Telford was however employed and paid by the Post Office in connection with a number of schemes to improve major post roads. The roads between Carlisle and Glasgow, like the routes to Holyhead were turnpiked. Both however passed through areas with a sparse population, lacking in local traffic, and consequently faced the same problem, a lack of funds to effect major improvements, coupled with an inability to pay interest on existing mortgage bonds which precluded the raising of further finance. The Post Office, because of its concern in coach routes to Glasgow and Port Patrick, took an interest in government sponsered surveys carried out in 1811 by Rennie on the Dumfries to Newton Stewart road, and Telford on the Carlisle to Port Patrick road. Thomas Hasker gave evidence before the select committee that reported on the Carlisle to Glasgow road in 1815, after the route had been surveyed by Telford, and the Post Office was one of the beneficiaries of the improved road resulting from the £50,000 granted under a parliamentary act of 1816. In March 1824 Telford carried out a survey of the road between Glasgow and Port Patrick for which the Post Office paid his survey fee of £392-13-6d, and in September of the same year he received authority to carry out a survey of the road from Carlisle to Glasgow via Dumfries.[1] From May 1823 Telford was employed on a survey of the roads from Northleach to Milford Haven and Bristol to Milford Haven for which he was paid £3,750-9-3½d by the Post Office in June 1825. Surveys of the east coast route to Scotland resulted in payments to Telford from the Post Office of £848-10s in September 1824 for the section Morpeth to Edinburgh and £4316-14-3d in August 1827 for the road Morpeth to London. A survey authorised by the Post Office in March 1825 to find an improved route to Liverpool involving a bridge over the River Mersey at Runcorn resulted in Telford receiving a survey fee of £1308-0-6d

1. POR Post 1/32/91, Post 1/35/60; PRO T22/17/172, T22/17/234, T22/19/110-11; BPP 1810-11(212) III 789; 1814-15(463) III 331; W.T. Jackman, The Development of Transportation in Modern Britain (3rd edn 1966) p269

in August 1826, following a payment of £583 made in April of the same year for a survey of the road between Derby and Stockport. The Post Office obviously regarded these survey fees as a good investment for they were designed to promote the turnpike trusts to act upon Telford's advice and carry out extensive improvements which would afford the chance of increasing the speed of mail-coaches. Parliament might also be persuaded on the basis of the survey to set up a select committee to consider and perhaps endorse the scheme, even if no Treasury grant was forthcoming for improvements. This patronage of Telford by the Post Office, at a time when there was a growing interest in road engineering in order to afford more easily graded routes for the growing volume of coaching, was an important factor in effecting improvements on major lines of road.[1]

The work of John Loudon McAdam was also recognised as being of value to the Post Office and worthy of encouragement. McAdam's ideas on road repair and administration received publicity initially due to the patronage of Sir John Sinclair, Chairman of the Board of Agriculture. Sinclair headed a parliamentary committee set up in 1810 to investigate highway conditions, and invited McAdam to submit his ideas on road construction to it. The publication and distribution of this report helped to bring his name before the public, and in 1816 when he became surveyor-general to the Bristol Trust he had a chance to put his ideas into practice. Within a very short while McAdam's work became known to the Post Office. The Earl of Chichester, one of the Postmasters-General from 1807 to 1826 had McAdam's methods brought to his notice early in 1817 and was responsible in that year for his employment advising no fewer than nine Sussex turnpike trusts, who appointed J.W. Campbell, a surveyor trained by McAdam at Bristol, to supervise

1. BPP 1826(278) XI 107; 1826-27(258) III 551; 1826-27(362) VII 71; PRO T22/19/109, T22/19/111, T22/19/117, T22/19/121-22, T22/19/125, T22/19/129-30, T22/19/143, T22/19/158-59; POR Post 1/32/88, Post 1/32/105, Post 1/32/111, Post 1/32/118, Post 1/32/139, Post 1/34/305, Post 1/35/186, Post 1/35/224, Post 1/35/258, Post 1/35/261, Post 1/35/275, Post 1/35/330, Post 1/35/382, Post 1/35/388-95, Post 1/36/385

improvements suggested. McAdam's work on the road from Bath to Bristol was early noted by the Post Office who found that not only was the delay to mail-coaches experienced prior to 1816 quickly eliminated but the need to allow additional time in the winter was no longer necessary.[1] Soon McAdam's methods were being actively publicised by Post Office officials. In 1818 Mr C Johnson, Hasker's successor as Superintendant of Mail-Coaches, wrote to the commissioners of the Bedfont to Bagshot Trust complaining of the way mail-coaches were being delayed passing through Egham because the road had been wastefully "covered with gravel unsifted, eight or nine inches deep from side to side." Johnson must have recommended McAdam's services to the Trust and on 17 December 1818 he was able to report that McAdam had a surveyor at work at Egham and was to meet the trustees to advise them further. Clearly this was not the only commission which had come McAdam's way through the good offices of the Post Office, for in a letter written at this time he stated, "I have informed Lord Chichester what has been done respecting Egham and the application of the other trustees". In November 1819 McAdam memorialised the Treasury for payment of £6,857-3-6d which he had expended in his efforts to effect improvements to public roads and promote his ideas on road maintenance. The claim was submitted to the Post Office who although they denied ever officially employing McAdam did concede that "great public benefit has certainly ensued from the adoption of an admirable System of Road making almost all thru' the Country by Mr McAdam and others." In connection with this claim the Post Office paid McAdam £4,000 in 1820 and a further £70-8s in 1823. Although at the time of his claim the Post Office was able to deny any official employment, this was to follow. In October 1822 he was requested to attend a meeting of the trustees of the Manchester and Buxton Trust at Stockport and in 1826 surveyed the Carlisle to Port Patrick, Chorley to Bolton, and Derby to Alferton roads for the Post Office.[2]

1. POR Post 1/34/308; Albert op cit pp 142-43; Brian Austen, "John Loudon McAdam and the Lewes to Eastbourne Turnpike", Transport History Vol 7 No 1 March 1974 pp 43-45.

2. POR Post 10/28; 2A64; Post 1/34/169, Post 1/35/354; BPP 1819 (509) V 339 p11; 1821(424) XXI 255

A further assistance to the users of roads in England and Wales was afforded by the patronage of and co-operation with the publishers of road books. In 1794 the Post Office commissioned John Cary to carry out a survey of all the mail-coach roads of the kingdom. For this work he received from the Post Office 9d a mile, the cost of employing the five surveyors who conducted the work using surveyor's wheels. Cary in addition had the right to use the measurements in a new road book which he first published in 1798 (Cary's New Itinerary), for which in addition Hasker provided information obtained from postmasters and contractors. Cary's survey was to show a number of inaccuracies in the measurements previously used by the Post Office, which as contractors were paid by distance, were important. London to York for instance had been paid as 196 miles, Cary showed that it ought to be 193. As a result of Cary's work the Post Office were saving £140 per annum by 1799. Cary's distances were admitted by Johnson in 1827 to be the basis still used for postal calculations. The Post Office also provided information to the previously established and rival road book, Patterson's Roads. As early as 1790 Freeling had received instructions to help Colonel Patterson and had sent him corrected maps and other material. There was to be renewed co-operation from 1801, one reason being Freeling's marriage to the daughter of the new proprietor of the road book, Francis Newberry. The two publications were active rivals and the use by Patterson's Roads of Cary's new figures of measurement resulted in an action in the Court of Chancery in 1799.[1]

The method of road maintenance and administration in Ireland presented a number of points of difference from that of the rest of the United Kingdom, but the system of Post Office surveys and government financial assistance existed and exerted an

1. POR Post 10/24/148, Post 10/26/5, Post 10/26/72; Post 40/74/44E; BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 5 p29; Patterson's Roads (13th edn 1803) pp v-xix

important influence. The turnpike system was less extensive in Ireland and in 1832 only 631 miles of road were maintained by this method. Many trusts suffered a low volume of traffic and were unable to maintain their roads effectively. A further 139 miles of main road had been vested by act of parliament in the control of individuals for fixed spans of time, who maintained the road at their expense and collected tolls from travellers in anticipation of profit. One such road was that from Naas to Limerick, the route of the Limerick to Dublin mail-coach. In 1791 John Anderson a Cork merchant and William Bourne of Dublin agreed to contract for a mail-coach to Limerick. The road was narrow, hilly and circuitous and the condition such that the service had to be withdrawn for the winter. The cost of laying out a new line of road was £27,000 and this they agreed to do in return for the right to levy tolls. This was granted to them by an Act of the Irish Parliament initially for 31 years but later in 1798 extended to 50 years (38 Geo III c83 Irish). Other public roads vested in individuals were the Dublin to Kilcullen road, the southern division of the Ashbourne Road and the Cork to Kilworth Mountain Road. The bulk of the main post roads were however under the control of the Grand Juries of the counties through which they ran. None of these three groups of roads was considered entirely satisfactory by the select committee which examined the state of Irish roads in 1832. Turnpikes generally suffered from low revenue, and the consequent inability to carry out any major works, pay interest when due or raise further finance. None were found to be under the control of engineers or qualified surveyors. The privately repaired roads were better maintained but clearly open to abuse, and toll rates in the case of the Naas to Limerick road were manipulated by Anderson and Bourne to achieve a near monopoly for their own coaches on the road.[1]

Provision was made in an act of 1805 to try to effect improvements in the roads controlled by county juries.

1. POR Post 15/154/308; BPP 1829(353) XII 1 pp 64-69; 1831-32(645) XVII 397 pp 10-11

This act empowered the Irish Postmasters-General to commission and pay for surveys of mail-coach routes or those roads proposed to be used by mail-coaches. An engineer and six assistants were appointed under the powers conferred by this act. The surveys and estimates of costs, when completed, were presented to the grand juries of the counties through which the roads passed. Loans could be made from the Irish treasury for the repair and improvement of such roads, but in this and subsequent work the Post Office had no part. Some counties co-operated, some did not. The line of the Waterford mail-coach passed through the counties of Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford, but as County Carlow refused to repair its road the efforts of the other two were largely wasted, the route still unsatisfactory and the money expended on the survey spent in vain. No effective powers of indictment of turnpike trusts or enforcement of action by the county juries existed in Ireland. By 1822 the Irish Post Office had expended £50,000 on surveys and the Treasury much more in loans but the road network was still far from satisfactory. Funds were apt to be wasted or looted, while dubious road repairing practices that would have roused the ire of McAdam were prevalent. Road repair was often contracted out to "jobbers" at 1/- per perch of 7 yds per annum. These men were described as "generally ignorant persons, who study their own interest more than the road" while their contract payment was less than half that which would have been required by a proficient road contractor. As late as 1838 James Cummings, the Resident Mail-coach Inspector in Ireland could report main coach routes such as those from Dublin to Cork via Cashel and Cork to Mallow in a dreadful state. On the former road, where repairs were being undertaken at all, they were being effected with the "most objectionable material composed of round stones and dirt" while the latter was declared to be "now left to its fate." For the privilege of passing over many such roads the Irish mail-coaches were obliged to pay toll though some parliamentary acts such as those for the Cork to Skibereen, Cork to Kinsale and Belfast to Antrim roads had clauses in the Acts freeing mail-coaches from payment.[1]

1. POR Post 10/165; BPP 1822(513) VI 241 pp 4,17,28-29; 1829(353) XII 1 p67; 1831-32(645) XVII 397 pp 4-7, 10-11, Appendix 1 p iii; 1841(179) XXVI 425

Road improvements were effective in increasing the speeds of coaches both mail and stage. One of the main reasons put forward by John Palmer for the establishment of mail-coaches was the considerable increase in the speed of mails that it would effect. Before 1784 the Post Office had hoped for a transit speed of 6 m.p.h. but generally did not achieve it. John Palmer had confidently predicted that his mail-coaches would travel at between 8 and 9 miles per hour, but this was only achieved on the Bristol road initially, justifying the remark by Philip Allen when objecting to the implementation of the scheme that this road was far from typical of British roads generally.[1] Mail-coaches certainly improved significantly on the timings achieved by mail carts however. By 1792 an average speed of 7.25 m.p.h. was scheduled for 19 mail-coach services operating from London, and if stoppages for meals and office duty is excluded the rate was 7.56 m.p.h. The fastest time was achieved on the London to Bristol route, Palmer's original service, which travelled at 8.3 m.p.h. or 8.52 m.p.h. stoppages excluded. English and Welsh provincial and cross routes tended to be slower and 14 such routes operating in 1792 give an average speed of 6.67 m.p.h. or 6.83 m.p.h. stoppages excluded. One route, that from Bristol to Hubberstone through South Wales was only to achieve 5.59 m.p.h. or 6.04 m.p.h. stoppages excluded, though the Ipswich to Norwich coach managed 8 m.p.h. These figures have been extracted from a collection of timebills that survive for 1792, and a further batch covering 20 routes from London and 13 provincial and cross services exist for 1797. The timings shown on these represent no improvement in speed over those of five years earlier and in fact show a slight deterioration with an average overall speed of 7.08 m.p.h. for the services from London and 6.32 m.p.h. for provincial and cross routes. The 1797 batch have a number of interesting manuscript notes added to them which suggest that these speeds applied to the summer services and that in winter regular delay by up to an hour might be expected.[2]

1. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 33 p101
2. POR 2A3A; BC 546.4 Chesterfield volume of timebills

By 1836 a considerable degree of improvement had been effected however

Table 30 - Speeds of Mail-coaches - England and Wales 1792 and 1836[1]

Route	1792 Overall speed	1792 Excluding stoppages	1836 Overall speed	1836 Excluding stoppages
	m.p.h.	m.p.h.	m.p.h.	m.p.h.
A. London to:				
Bristol via Marlborough	8.3	8.52	10.3	10.3
Holyhead	6.3	6.67	9.73	10.17
Liverpool	7.22	7.5	9.67	9.9
Carlisle	7.8	8.22	8.92	9.44
Edinburgh	6.79	7.4	9.76	10
Leeds	6.65	7.05	9.23	9.71
Worcester	7.38	7.61	9.27	9.33
Norwich via Ipswich	7.67	7.93	9.77	9.91
Norwich via Newmarket	7.59	7.86	8.92	9.13
Dover	7.05	7.05	8.79	8.92
Portsmouth	7.2	7.2	8.08	8.08
Exeter via Salisbury	7.21	7.51	9.29	9.6
B. Provincial				
Bristol - Milford	5.59	6.04	9.06	9.57
Southampton-Lymington	7.2	7.2	8.57	8.57
York - Hull	6.51	6.51	9.12	9.12
Worcester - Ludlow	6.4	6.4	8.8	8.8
Average speed	7.05	7.29	9.21	9.41

Sources: POR 2A3A; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part 1 263 Appendix 23 pp 42-44

Note: 1. Only those services that operated throughout the entire period 1792-1836 have been selected.

In 1836 the overall speed of all the four horse mails operating in England and Wales was 9.04 m.p.h. and for two horse mails

7.78 m.p.h. If we exclude the latter group, as this type of coach was not in use for mail carriage in the 1790s, the average speed appears to have improved by 29.14% between 1792 and 1836.[1] The process of accelerating the mails began on a small scale before 1810 in connection with the London to Holyhead services. The new route set up in 1808 via Shrewsbury and Llangollen showed a saving of four hours over the previous service via Chester which took 46 hours, but this was largely achieved by adopting a shorter route. This saving was in practice less than four hours as the coach proved unable to keep to schedule over the new route. Telford's improved road through North Wales, coupled with the adoption of the direct route through Coventry instead of Oxford did however reduce the time a further six hours in 1816. This acceleration was however exceptional as early as this and is accounted for by parliamentary pressure.[2] Acceleration could only be achieved where road conditions had improved significantly, and at extra cost to the coach contractor who would need to change horses more frequently and be prepared for a shorter active life from them. Acceleration was thus not necessarily popular with coach proprietors and often resisted unless competition forced their hand. Acceleration of mail-coaches might also require considerable alteration of the times of connecting and branch mails, which in their turn might have to be accelerated and higher rates of payment made to contractors. Most acceleration appears to have taken place in the 1820s and 1830s on a piecemeal basis as oportunity presented itself or when it was necessary to react to public pressure.[3]

In Scotland coaching was later to develop, and only two routes were open by 1792, if routes originating in England

1. POR 2A3A; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 23 pp 42-44
2. BPP 1819(548) V 157 p41
3. POR Post 10/1/29; BPP 1834(48) XLIX 497 p4; 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 51 p89

are excluded. These two routes were Glasgow to Ayr and Edinburgh to Port Patrick and the speed attained was 6.26 m.p.h. overall or 6.33 m.p.h. if stoppages are excluded. This is a lower average than that for even the provincial and cross mail-coaches in England and Wales. Speeds in Scotland appear to have remained low until about 1820. The Edinburgh to Aberdeen service when introduced in 1798 was only capable of 6.05 m.p.h. overall and the Aberdeen to Inverness service introduced in 1809 achieved only 5.94 m.p.h. overall. As late as 1816 the Glasgow to Port Patrick service was timed at 5.65 m.p.h. overall. Inferior road conditions and heavier gradients may well have been the main factors in keeping speeds low. A great improvement was however effected in the 1820s and 1830s and by 1836 the average speed for four horse coaches was 9.12 m.p.h. and for two horse coaches 7.54 m.p.h., speeds roughly comparable with those in England and Wales.[1]

Ireland provided a pattern similar to that of Scotland, of very low speeds initially, and substantial improvement from about 1820. When the Dublin to Limerick service was established in 1791 it was timed to operate at 4 Irish miles[2] per hour and as late as 1820 most Irish mail-coaching contracts specified no more than 5 Irish miles per hour, though on main routes out of Dublin a speed of 6.8 m.p.h. (5.34 Irish miles per hour) was being achieved in that year. The average speed of all Irish mail-coaches in 1832 was 7,35 m.p.h. and in 1836 8.25 m.p.h., the same as Scotland and only slightly inferior to England and Wales (8.875 m.p.h.) (See table 31 p161). Irish mail cars were considerably slower averaging 5.99 m.p.h. in 1832 and 6.33 m.p.h. in 1836.[3]

One feature of John Palmer's plan had been the operation of his coaches to a fixed and strictly enforced timetable.

1. POR 2A3A; Post 10/14; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 23 p44

2. An Irish mile equals 1 mile 2 furlongs 7 3/11 perches (1.2727272 miles). Distances listed in this thesis for Ireland are expressed in British statute miles unless otherwise stated.

3. BPP 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix pp84-87; 1831-32(716) XVII p288; Appendices 18 and 19 pp 338-42; 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendices 23 and 24 pp 43-46

Table 31 - Overall speeds of the main Irish mail-coaches 1822-41

Route	Speeds (British statute miles per hour)			
	1820	1832	1836	1841
Dublin - Belfast	6.8	7.7	8.75	8.75
- Cork via Cashel	6.27	7.64	7.88	
- Cork via Clonmel	7.27	7.27	8.5	7.8 (winter) 8.63 (summer)
- Enniskillen	6.38	7.31	8.63	
- Galway	6.34	8.32	9	
- Howth	9	9		
- Limerick	6.26	8.37	9.13	9.5
- Londonderry	6.55	7.78	8.38	8.5
- Waterford	6.8	7.6	8	
- Wexford	6.48	6.97	7.75	8.5
Average speeds	6.81	7.8	8.45	8.63

Sources: BPP 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix pp 84-87; 1831-32(716) XVIII Appendix 18 pp 338-42; 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 23 p 44; 1841(179) XXVI 425

The idea was not entirely novel, for the use of timebills to accompany mails, in order to maintain regularity, had been a feature of Thomas Witherings plan to reform services for overseas mails and had been in use since 1633, while newspapers and directories not infrequently advertised a projected time of arrival for stage-coaches. On mail-coaches the maintenance of punctuality was the duty of the guard, a Post Office employee, who was supplied not only with a timebill but also a locked timepiece. He would be required to explain any discrepancy between the scheduled and actual time of arrival and was obliged to report laxity and negligence on the part of the coach contractor or his servant, the coach driver. Poor timekeeping could result in missed connections and general delay in the delivery of the mail. The ability to maintain time depended to a considerable degree on road conditions though initially a rigid degree of timekeeping was also novel to the contractors and crews who had to be reminded of its necessity by sharp reprimand and even dismissal. In the summer months, barring accident or breakdown, times appear to have been maintained without too much difficulty. In winter, even if snow did not intervene,

difficulties might be experienced in maintaining the service to time. This was especially true before c1820 when the effects of improved road construction methods began to be felt. Thomas Hasker in October 1793 was asked by the Postmasters-General to state the reasons for the late arrival of mail-coaches. He pointed out that tardiness regularly set in about September and October explaining that wet days about this time led to a deterioration of the roads and required much greater efforts from the horses. More of the journey had to be undertaken after dark and the horses were often weaker.[1] Timebills for mail-coaches operating to London usually specified an arrival time of 4 or 5 a.m. but Hasker declared himself satisfied if they arrived by 6 a.m. Despite this margin the last coaches in winter often did not arrive until after 7 a.m. and occasionally not till 8 a.m. This could delay the commencement of the delivery of London letters till as late as 9.30 a.m. On every postday between 15 September and 17 October 1792 one or more of the coaches arrived in London after 7 a.m. In December even longer delays might occur.[2]

Table 32 - Late mail-coach arrivals in London for the month of December

Year	Number of coaches arriving after				
	8 a.m.	8.30 a.m.	9 a.m.	10 a.m.	12 a.m.
1790		8	4		
1791		15	5	1	1
1792	12		4		
1793	2		1		

Source: POR Post 10/24/123-28

A survey carried out at Dublin in the years 1808-09 enables us to compare the regularity of coaches operating in both summer and winter on eight main routes into the city.

1. POR Post 10/24/123-28

2. A survey of the arrival at Ferrybridge of the coach from Carlisle carried out in January and December 1793 showed 40.59% of all services arriving late and of these 10.89% were more than 30 minutes late. (Source POR Post 10/24/9)

Table 33 - Regularity of mail-coaches operating into Dublin 1808-09

	July - Sept. 1808		Jan. - March 1809	
Journeys completed early	261	38.84%	293	41.15%
Journeys completed to time	340	50.89%	297	41.72%
Journeys completed late	69	10.27%	122	17.13%

Source: POR Post 10/17

This survey seems to indicate a considerable degree of regularity in the operation of the service, though the speed of operation of mail-coaches was lower in Ireland at this date than in England and Wales. The slightly higher volume of late arrivals at Dublin in the winter months will be noted. These figures do mask the fact that the incidence of serious lateness was much higher in the winter. In the summer of 1808 only 1.9% of all arrivals at Dublin were more than 30 minutes late. The comparable figure for the winter of 1809 was 11.06%. It is likely that with improvements made in the main lines od roads from about 1820 that a greater level of reliability was possible, despite the higher speeds expected, but as late as 1841 a slower scheduled speed had to be allowed on the Dublin to Cork via Clonmel route and during January and February of that year the service was late every day, the delay being attributed to weather conditions, the state of the road and the horses contracting distemper.[1]

A scheme for increasing substantially the speed of mail transmission, in return for a premium rate of postage, was put forward in 1819 by Henry Burgess[2] the economist and banker. He pointed out that mail sent from London to Manchester by mail-coach did not arrive until 11 p.m. the following day.

1. BPP 1841(179) XXVI 425

2. (1799-1863). London inventor, economist, pamphleteer, editor of The Bankers' Circular and a partner of Baring Brothers.

As the return coach departed at 2 a.m. there was at least one days delay in despatching a reply. All mail-coaches departed from London at 8 p.m. so places at a similar distance from the capital would suffer equally with Manchester.

> "Those points where the operation in the present mail established is the most defective, are comprised in districts of the highest commercial importance: viz between the distance of one hundred and sixty and two hundred miles from London including Yorkshire and Lancashire as well as Devonshire."

His solution was to operate light carriages weighing 9 cwts drawn by two horses which he calculated would travel at between 11 and 11½ miles per hour overall. This "extra post" would supplement mail-coaches and depart two hours earlier than them. Initially Burgess envisaged only a guard and coachman being carried. In addition to the routes to Lancashire and Yorkshire extra post routes were planned from London to Holyhead and to Falmouth, and a number of cross routes to connect South Lancashire with Falmouth, Holyhead and Hull. Costs of transit would be higher and Burgess initially suggested quadrupled rates of postage for the extra post, but no doubt fearing that the public would not swallow such an imposition added that "both the objects of revenue and the public convenience will be best attained by a double postage."[1] Burgess managed to interest the Treasury in the scheme which was to be established at the expense of the projector, who was to receive a seven year farm of all the revenue produced above the ordinary rate of postage. Despite letters supporting the scheme from important commercial and manufacturing interests who saw the advantages of early intelligence, the Post Office were not enthusiastic. They doubted the accuracy of the calculations that Burgess had made, with some justification, and felt that a number of important practical problems had been overlooked. Nevertheless the Post Office had no wish to be accused once more of obstructing the path of progress and agreed to co-operate with the experiment in operating a service from London to Manchester. Potential pockets of opposition to the scheme were however beginning to

1. Henry Burgess, A Plan for Obtaining a More Speedy Postage Communication between London and Distant Parts of the Kingdom (1819)

identify themselves. Mercantile and commercial interests in some towns were fearful that they might be omitted, giving rivals in a similar line of trade in nearby towns a 24 hour advantage with market intelligence.

> "It must be partial in its operation, and unjust and injurious where it does not extend; ... encourage speculators to the detriment of the fair trader."

Burgess was now proposing to carry passengers and parcels and mail-coach contractors were threatening to set up in opposition against the extra post coaches.[1] A Parliamentary Select Committee which looked into the scheme reported on 26 June 1821 in favour of an experiment even conceding that "some increase of public charge would be fully compensated for". A bill was introduced in the House of Commons to allow double rates of postage to be charged for extra post letters, but opposition to the measure was strong, and as franked letters from M.P.s were to be excluded from the extra post transmission, no motive of self-interest existed to enlist any wide support, and in July 1821 the bill was defeated. This must have been a considerable shock to the Treasury, who confident that the scheme would be implemented had in May 1821 encouraged Burgess to obtain carriages, horses and employees to implement the experiment. Services were actually operated between London and Manchester for about three months producing passenger revenue of £957-5-4d. Without the power of levying an additional postal charge however the scheme could not be viable and had to be dropped. In view of their encouragement the Treasury agreed that Burgess deserved compensation for the money laid out to promote his scheme, though the Commons were reluctant to concede this. Burgess was described as "a spirited projector, baffled by the opposition to his plan, both in and out of parliament", but his failure did bring one positive benefit. Mail-coach contractors had been alarmed by the extra post scheme and saw that their best insurance against its re-introduction was an accelerated service provided

1. BPP 1821(592) XXI 203; JHC Vol 76 23 Jan 1821-3 Jan 1822 pp 394, 405, 410

by themselves. They were therefore much more amenable than previously to Post Office proposals to cut journey times and in papers laid before the House of Commons concerning the claim of Henry Burgess it was noted with satisfaction that "in consequence of his experiment, the departments of the Post Office appear to have been stimulated in perfecting the improvements which have recently taken place in the conveyance of the Northern Mails."[1]

Since the inception of the mail-coach network, the routes operating from London had all departed from the General Post Office at the single fixed hour of 8 p.m. A similar system operated in Ireland for routes radiating from Dublin, except that a day mail-coach had provided a duplicated service to Belfast since November 1814 and by 1837 the Kilkenny and the Cork coaches were despatched in the morning. By the late 1830s there had developed not only a clamour for the acceleration of mail-coaches but also for their duplication by day despatches from London using stage-coaches. The question of day mails was discussed by the Parliamentary Commissioners appointed to enquire into the management of the Post Office in 1837 and also in the First Report from the Select Committee on Postage (1838). The Post Office was far from enthusiastic about duplicating its services. It pointed out that such day mails would only be of advantage to places within a 60 to 70 mile radius of London, or beyond a 140 to 150 mile radius, as between these points mails would be delivered during the night when immediate delivery could not be effected. The Post Office claimed that delivery to places within an 80 mile radius of London would cost £15,000 p.a. whereas the revenue from the 4,000 or so letters detained every day for places in the area would only bring in about £5,000 per annum. The Post Office could also point out that such a scheme if adopted would probably only enjoy a brief existence as the opening of railway lines would necessitate the complete recasting of the distribution

1. BPP 1821(688) IV 331; 1821(590) II 1139; 1822(454) XVIII 173; (T. Hansard), The Parliamentary Debates, New Series Vol VI(1822) p 1433

network. Day mails by railway would make much more sense as a radius of 180 to 200 miles would be possible with trains travelling at 22 m.p.h. and this would enable such mails to reach the important commercial areas of the Midlands, Lancashire and Yorkshire.[1] Rowland Hill, the postal reformer, was a strong advocate of day mails and his programme for the re-invigoration of the Post Office included the despatch of day mails to every principal town within eight hours journey time of London. In the event day mails did materialise to Birmingham, Brighton and Dover and with the commencement of the despatch of mails by rail additional services were provided though the number of places thus served fell short of that envisaged in Rowland Hill's plan.[2]

The use of mail-coaches ensured a greater speed of transmission and a high degree of security to the mails. It also had one other advantage as far as the Post Office was concerned - its cheapness. By combining the carriage of passengers and parcels with mail transit and then permitting passage free of toll, a low cost of transmission for the mails could be achieved. From the very commencement of the service it showed a saving over the previous method of transit by cart or rider. Despite the fact that Palmer initially paid a rather generous allowance to coach contractors, already by 1786 a saving of 47% was being achieved over the previous cost of conveyance on six of the main roads operating from London. Details of these relative costs are given in table 34 p168. There is no reason for thinking that these are not typical of the system as a whole at this date.[3] By 1790 the rate paid for conveyance had been reduced on most routes to 1d a mile compared with the usual rate of conveyance by horse and cart of 1.79d,[4] and it was calculated that if the

1. POR Post 1/44/108; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 pp 7,9,10-11, Appendix 64 p119; 1837-38(278) XX Part I p114

2. Rowland Hill, Post Office Reform its Importance and Practicability (1837); W.H. Ashurst, Facts and Reasons in Support of Mr Rowland Hill's Plan for a Universal Penny Postage(1838)p30;Anon, Remarks on a Paper by Rowland Hill Esq on the Results of the New Postage Arrangements (1841) pp 13-14; (Rowland Hill), Requisites to the Completion of Mr Rowland Hill's Plan of Post Office Improvement (1843) pp 8-9; Anon, The Administration of the Post Office from the Introduction of Mr Rowland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time(1844)

3. POR Post 96/23/3 4. £4-13-4d per double mile per annum

Table 34 - Cost of mail conveyance 1784 compared with 1786

Route	1784 Annual expense of conveyance by mail cart	1786 Annual expense of conveyance by mail-coach
London to Dover	£420-19-4d	£222-16-8d
London to Portsmouth	£391-10s	£222-16-8d
London to Norwich & Yarmouth via Newmarket	£540-7-4d	£415-11s
London to York & Berwick	£2321-2-4d	£1174-7-9d
London to Bristol	£831-16-8d	£376-8-1d
London to Holyhead via Chester	£1631-16-8d	£840-2-9d
	£6137-12-4d	£3252-2-11d

Source: POR Post 96/23/3

mail carts had been accelerated to travel at 8 m.p.h. the cost would have been 2.31d.[1] Mail-coaches would in addition be obliged to meet the cost of the guard at about ⅓d a mile, though some mail carts also were guarded. Rates of conveyance by mail-coaches were forced up from the low 1790 level by the higher cost of animal feed, government taxation on coaches and other materials and labour during the Napoleonic Wars and 1½d a mile had become common by 1805 and rates were to remain at about this level until the late 1820s (see table 35 p 169). They were to rise steadily through the late 1820s and 1830s, in part because of the increased speeds required by the Post Office which necessitated shorter stages and additional horses. Competition was also becoming fiercer, with stage- coaches equalling the speed and timekeeping achieved by the mails, but operating at more convenient times of departure, and licenced to carry more passengers than mail-coaches. On some routes steam vessels were also providing additional competition and mail-coach contracts were generally not as attractive as formerly.[2]

1. £7 per double mile per annum
2. POR Post 97/4/29; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 27 p53

Table 35 - Rates of remuneration paid to mail-coach contractors 1790-1835 (old pence per mile)

Route	Rate paid by the G.P.O. for conveying the mails												
	1790	1800	1805	1810	1815	1818	1820	1823	1825	1828	1830	1833	1835
London to Bristol	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2½d	2½d	2d	2d
London to Dover	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d
London to Exeter	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2½d	2½d
London to Holyhead via Oxford				1½d	1½d								
London to Holyhead via Coventry						6d	3d	1½d	1½d	2d	2d	2d	2d
London to Leeds	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2½d	2½d	2½d	2½d
London to Liverpool	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2d	2d	2d	2d
London to Manchester	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2d	2d	2d	2d
London to Portsmouth	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	4d	4d
London to York	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d				
London to Edinburgh via York										2½d	2½d	2d	2d
Bristol to Birmingham	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2½d	
Bristol to Carmarthen	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	3d	3d	4d
Carlisle to Manchester	1d	2d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	1½d	2d	2d	2d	2d
Average rate	1d	2d	1.5d	1.5d	1.5d	1.9d	1.6d	1.5d	1.5d	1.9d	2d	2.3d	2.4d

Source: BPP 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 27 p53

Notes: Figures listed as for the month of July in the year stated. Until 1803 1% was deducted from the contract rate shown. From 1800 to 1810 the rate was subject to considerable fluctuation.

Their cost however still compared favourably with other forms of mail conveyance.

Table 36 - Cost of mail conveyance 1827 amd 1838

Type of conveyance	1827 United Kingdom	1838 England & Wales	1838 Scotland
Mail-coaches	2.29d per mile	2.44d per mile	1.56d per mile
Mail carts	3.19d per mile	2.56d per mile	2.81d per mile
Saddle horses	2.76d per mile	2.63d per mile	1.88d per mile
Footposts	1.73d per mile	1.86d per mile	1.13d per mile

Sources: BPP 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 31 p294; 1837-38(658) XX Part II 1 Appendix 54 p251

In Ireland the rates paid to coach proprietors were higher than those in the rest of the British Isles. This was in part due to the lower volume of coaching traffic and the lack of competition for mail-coach contracts. Fewer people wished to travel, road conditions were generally inferior while Irish mail-coach contractors were expected to meet the cost of turnpike tolls on many routes. It was however argued by the Post Office that this latter cost was more than offset by the fact that in Ireland they did not have to pay licence duty on the coach. In 1820 the average cost of mail-coach conveyance in Ireland by all services was 4.14d per mile while in 1829 prices paid to mail-coach contractors varied from 2.36d to 5.9d per mile.[1] By 1838 the average rate had fallen to 3.25d per mile thus reversing the trend seen in England and Wales for rates to rise. Even so they were still about a third higher than those in England and Wales and over double those in Scotland. Rates for mail carts or gigs, saddle horse mails and footposts were however lower in Ireland than the rest of the British Isles.[2]

The mail-coach did not exterminate earlier forms of mail transport which were still required on those routes connecting

1. 6d to 15d per double mile i.e. a double Irish mile.

2. BPP 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix 15 pp 84-87; 1829(353) XII 1 p62; 1837-38(658) XX Part II 1 Appendix 54 p251

with the main lines of postal communication where lack of passengers or inconvenient hours of departure or arrival made the operation of coaches unremunerative. Routes by mail cart, saddle horse and footpost provided most of the feeder and cross services. Numerically the routes operated by mail-coach were small compared with those using other means of transit but they were each longer in distance and carried much heavier loads of mail. In 1838 the system was made up as follows

Table 37 - Types of transit used to convey mails 1838

	Number of routes							
	Mail-coaches	%	Carts	%	Saddle horses	%	Footposts	%
England & Wales	125	64.43%	249	66.58%	151	69.59%	412	51.12%
Scotland	32	16.5%	35	9.36%	25	11.52%	201	24.93%
Ireland	37	19.07%	90	24.06%	41	18.89%	193	23.95%

The mail-coach system at this date was at its height and within the next few years was to be reduced to a shadow of its former importance and increasingly relegated to remoter parts of the British Isles by the substitution of the railway.[1]

1. BPP 1837-38(658) XX Part II 1 Appendix 55 p255

Chapter 5 - The Administration and Supervision of Mail-coach Services

Before 1797 when a new Post Office establishment was implemented, responsibility for all forms of internal mail transmission outside London, with the exception of Ireland[1], was vested in the Inland Office situated at the General Post Office in London. This was one of a number of departments into which the Post Office was divided for administrative purposes.[2] The controller of each department was responsible through the Secretary of the Post Office, the main executive officer, to the Postmasters-General. The Inland Department had in London an establishment of officers and clerks with executive and administrative functions, while outside London surveyors exercised a peregrinatory supervisory role. This pattern was disrupted to some extent in 1786 when the new position of Surveyor and Comptoller-General was created for John Palmer, eclipsing much of the power previously held by the Secretary and making the Comptroller of the Inland Office redundant. Under Palmer's direction both the administrative staff in London and the supervisory staff in the provinces were strengthened to cope with the expansion of services and traffic. Palmer's dismissal in 1793 saw the abolition of the post of Comptroller-General and a reversion of power once more to the Post Office Secretary.

Anthony Todd was Secretary to the Post Office at this period and the commencement of John Palmer's mail-coach plan did not initially, in theory at least, affect the executive structure. Palmer was at first not an appointed official of the Post Office but a private projector foisted on an unwilling postal service by the Treasury. There was no established post for him to occupy, and his mail-coaches were administered from a separate office rented by Palmer at 87 Lombard Street and staffed at his own expense with his own employees.[3] The rapid expansion

1. For details of the postal administration in Ireland see pp 179-81.

2. The other main departments were the Foreign Department and the London District Post.

3. POR Post 96/20/35, Post 96/22/1; Kenneth Ellis, The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century (1958) pp 24-25, 29

of the mail-coach network in 1785 necessitated an expansion of staff and by October of that year, apart from Palmer and his deputy Charles Bonnor, the office employed two clerks and four surveyors.[1] Already Palmer's presence, backed by the Treasury, was however eroding the power and authority of the Secretary and the officers of the Inland Department, and his official appointment as Surveyor and Comptroller-General in 1786 placed him in the role of the senior Post Office executive officer. The staff of his private mail-coach office now merged with that of the Inland Office which Palmer had taken control of. As a result of his appointment the three most senior members of staff of the Inland Department, the Comptroller, his Deputy and the Resident Surveyor, became redundant and their positions were abolished.[2] Appointments under Palmer after 1786 were therefore to the Inland Office which dealt with the entire administration of mail transmission, whether by coach or by other means. Some appointments were however specifically connected with mail-coaches such as that of Thomas Hasker as Superintendent of Mails and Mail-coaches from December 1788, and Samuel Wilkins and William Woolmer as his deputies.[3] Robert White, Palmer's second clerk had responsibility for checking timebills and being present at the arrival and despatch of mail-coaches to issue and receive back the locked timepieces and provide any necessary instructions. Walter Knight was appointed in January 1786 as Superintendent of Guards with responsibility for the instruction of newly appointed staff in this grade. These were however exceptions, most appointments being to the Inland Office generally.[4] At the time of his dismissal in 1793 Palmer's office in addition to his deputy and officers employed to directly supervise services, had an establishment of six clerks, six letter bill clerks, a superintendent of letter bill clerks and a "clerk of the tick book" with a total salary

1. POR Post 96/22/5; Post 97/9/385; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 70 p72
2. BPP 1797-98 XX pt I p20
3. BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 18 pp 83-84, 86
4. POR Post 96/22/6

bill of £3,430 per annum exclusive of additional emoluments and Palmer's percentage.[1] On Palmer's dismissal the Inland Office was placed nominally under Charles Bonnor, his deputy, as Comptroller of the Inland Department, but power began to be asserted once more by the Secretary, while Bonnor found himself obliged even within the Inland Office to share responsibility with Francis Freeling, the Resident Surveyor, four senior clerks designated Presidents, and Daniel Stowe who held the appointment of Superintendent President.[2] This establishment prevailed until 1797 when the staffing was recast and a Mail-coach Office separate from the Inland Department was set up.

The chief executive official of the Mail-coach Office was the Superintendent of Mail-coaches at a salary of £700 per annum, responsible through the Secretary to the Postmasters-General for the efficient operation of the service. His executive and administrative staff consisted of two assistants, one at £80 and the other at £50 per annum and two clerks at £70 and £60 per annum. In addition the Mail-coach Office had its own supervisory staff in the provinces to regulate the service consisting of five Assistant Superintendents of Mail-coaches.[3] The duties of the Mail-coach Office were

> "to superintend and regulate the Conveyance of the Mails by Coaches... according to the Contracts and Bills. To report to the Secretary on all matters connected with the subject, to correspond with the contractors &c &c, to examine and check all accounts for mileage allowances Travelling and Tradesman's Bills and all other expenses relating to Mail Coaches."

To this was added from the 1830s the superintendance of mails forwarded by rail and the negotiations and correspondence with the companies for such transit.[4] By 1817 the establishment of the Mail-coach office had been increased by two junior clerks while the salaries of senior staff had risen appreciably. The increase in staff was a reflection of the expansion of just over 59% in route mileage operated between 1797 and 1811, while general wage inflation during the Napoleonic Wars had helped

1. (Luke Hansard), Reports from the Committees of the House of Commons Vol XII (1803) Appendix C p202

2. BPP 1807(31) II 101 p10; Ellis op cit p29 3. See pp 182-85

4. POR Post 59/39/8, Post 59/42/7b; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 p33;(Luke Hansard), Reports from the Committees of the House of Commons Vol XII(1803) p202

to swell the salary bill. Thereafter, with the exception of the increase in the salary of the Superintendent of Mail-coaches to £950 by 1817 and its subsequent reduction to £450 in 1835, coupled with smaller reductions in salary for the first and second clerks, the establishment remained remarkably stable until the late 1830s despite a rise of 61% in route mileage between 1817 and 1835. The largest contributing factor to the increased work load came in 1831 when the merging of the British and Irish Post Offices resulted in the mail-coach network in Ireland becoming the administrative responsibility of the Mail-coach Office in London. The fact that between 1817 and 1835 the department was able to carry a vastly increased work load, while reducing its salary bill by 33.5% seems to support the contention of the parliamentary commission on the British Post Office of 1829 that the Mail-coach Office was over-staffed and over-paid. By 1839 however it was necessary to add one senior and one junior clerk to the establishment. The route mileage of mail-coaches had continued to rise and additionally mails conveyed by railway had to be administered.[1]

The reduction in salaries in the early 1830s was more severe than appears from the figures shown in table 38, for the substantial additional emoluments that staff had previously enjoyed were also removed. In 1829 the Superintendent of Mail-coaches was supplementing his salary of £750 by a further £101-19s, while the Chief Clerk added £130-13s to his salary of £300 by hiring lamps and supplying oil to the coach contractors. Even the first Junior Clerk could add £18 per annum to his salary of £90 by selling waste paper from the office. Deputy Superintendents, who over much of this period were allowed from 15s to 18s a day when travelling on duty, were expected to profit from this source to the extent of £60 per annum. In 1829 extra emoluments represented an addition of 21% to the official salaries in the Mail-coach Office. Another feature of the department was

1. See table 38 p176; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 p37

Table 38 - Establishment and salary bill[1] of the Mail-coach Office, London

Position	Salaries 1797	1811	1817	1821	1829	1832	1835	1839	
Superintendent of Mail-coaches	£700	£700	£950	£750	£750	£750	£450	£600	
Deputy Superintendents	£80	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	
	£50	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	
1st Clerk	£70	£150	£300	£300	£300	£300	£250	£250	
2nd Clerk	£60	£100	£130	£130	£130	£110	£110	£110	
								£110	2 Senior Clerks
Junior Clerks		£80	£100	£90	£90	£180	£80	£80	
		£70	£80	£80	£80		£80	£80	
								£80	
								£80	4 Junior Clerks
	£960	£1300	£1760	£1550	£1550	£1540	£1170	£1590	
Mileage of mail-coach network administered[2]	4698	7797	7322	7805	7936	9962	11815	12668	
Cost in office salaries per 1000 miles of mail-coach route[2]	£204.3	£166.7	£240.4	£198.6	£195.3	£154.6	£99	£125.6	

1. Excluding travelling expenses and emoluments. For details of these see p175.
2. Excluding distance operated by railway mails.

Sources: 1797 (Luke Hansard), Reports from the Committees of the House of Commons Vol XII(1803) Appendix C p202
1811 POR Post 1/24/119
1817 BPP 1817(146) XV 89
1821 POR Post 58/63
1829 BPP 1829(161) XI 1 p33
1832 POR Post 59/36
1835 BPP 1835(442) XLVIII 357
1839 POR Post 59/42/138

the stability of its staff

Table 39 - Length of service with the Post Office of Mail-coach Department staff

Position	Number of years service with the Post Office		
	1817	1821	1834
Superintendent of Mail-coaches	28	29	42
Principal Clerk	18	22	35
Senior Clerk	9	13	7
Junior Clerks	6	11	5
	7	3	3
Deputy Superintendents	9	13	19
	2	6	8
Total number of years' service	79	97	119
Average years of service	11.29	13.86	17

In the case of the clerks continuous service was encouraged by laying down a progressive salary scale based on the length of service.[1]

Longevity of service is however best illustrated in the careers of the senior officers of the department and especially in the holders of the office of Superintendent of Mail-coaches. The first Superintendent, Thomas Hasker, held office from December 1788 to July 1818 when he was forced to retire at the age of 66 because of ill-health. His successor Charles Johnson served until his death in January 1835. At the time of his death he had been employed in the Post Office in various capacities for 42 years. George Louis, his successor, held the post for only three years until July 1838 when he was obliged to retire for reasons of health and George Stowe was appointed in his place.[2] All the men who held this senior appointment

1. POR Post 58/63; BPP 1817(146) XV 89; 1829(161) XI 1 pp 32-33; Appendix 83 p444; 1834(20) XLIX 445; 1836(147) XXXVII 1

2. POR Post 35/20/237, Post 35/26/340; Post 42/105/372; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 44 p264; 1834(20) XLIX 445; 1837-38(278) XX Part I p118; 1844(318) XI 17 p129; 1845(72) XLVII 165 p5

had worked their way up through the Post Office service, no outsiders being considered as the duties made it expedient to have a person with "a thorough practical knowledge of the circulation of letters." Hasker had previous to his appointment been the postmaster first at Petworth and then Portsmouth, while Charles Johnson who had entered Post Office service in 1792 served in the Secretary's office for 25 years eventually becoming one of the chief clerks. Thereafter the holders of the position of Superintendent of Mail-coaches were recruited from the ranks of Post Office Surveyors. George Louis entered Post Office service in 1810 and was employed at the Foreign Department for 12 years before becoming a Surveyor responsible for the West of England - a post which he held for 11 years. George Stowe's career was very similar. He joined the Post Office in January 1818 as a clerk in the Foreign Department becoming a Surveyor in November 1833.

The post of Superintendent of Mail-coaches was a key one as he was responsible not only for the maintenance of the efficiency of the day to day operation of the services but for negotiating contracts, promoting the establishment of new routes and keeping the Secretary, and through him the Postmasters-General, informed of the operation of the Mail-coach Department. This importance is reflected in the high rate of salary paid. Although normally located at the General Post Office in London, the Superintendent was obliged to travel on duty and for this purpose was generously allowed £1-6s a day to cover his expenses and 2/- a mile for chaise hire.[1]

The Scottish Post Office was in virtually all respects subservient to the General Post Office in London and mail-coach services in this part of the United Kingdom were no exception.

1. POR Post 1/39/261, Post 1/41/308, Post 1/42/104, Post 1/47/267; Post 35/20/237, Post 35/26/340; Post 42/105/372; BPP 1806(309) VII 755 Appendix 22 p809; 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 44 p264; 1834(20) XLIX 445; 1836(111) XLV 373 p4; 1837-38(278) XX Part I 1 p118; 1844(318) XI 17 p129

All executive decisions regarding Scottish mail-coaches were taken in London, but from 1809 one of the Assistant Superintendents of Mail-coaches[1] was established at Edinburgh to regulate day to day operation of the mail-coaches, and in 1812 he was replaced, on petition of the Scottish Deputy Postmaster-General by one of the two Deputy Superintendents of Mail-coaches. His duties were "to see that the contractors act agreeably to the contracts and also to attend to the duties of the guards." He was responsible for maintaining accounts relating to toll payments on coaches and guards' wages and was responsible for the regulation of ferry crossings. He was clearly acting as an agent of the London Mail-coach Office with no executive power. Although his salary was paid in Edinburgh his claim for travelling allowances had to be approved and paid from London. He was further expected to be away from Edinburgh three days a week in summer and four in winter inspecting the mail-coaches on the road. Thus although he had a room in the General Post Office at Edinburgh for his use it could hardly be described as a mail-coach office. His duties did not differ to any marked degree from those of other Deputy and Assistant Superintendents of Mail-coaches in other parts of the United Kingdom. Joseph Wilson, who took on this position in 1812 was employed continuously at Edinburgh until he retired on pension in 1834 at the age of 65 after 34 years service with the Post Office to his credit. Edward Cloud, Wilson's successor, had previously been Second Clerk in the London Mail-coach Office. He held the office of Deputy Mail-coach Superintendent at Edinburgh until his death in 1840.[2]

Unlike Scotland, Ireland was an autonomous postal authority and remained so until 1831. It had its own Mail-coach Office in Dublin headed by a Superintendent of Mail-coaches responsible

1. For further details regarding this grade of officer see pp 182-85
2. POR Post 1/24/124, Post 1/41/45; Post 10/147; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 10 p103, Appendix 44 pp 283, 326.

through the Secretary of the Irish Post Office to the Irish Postmasters-General for the efficient operation of the service. Although mail-coaches started to operate in Ireland in 1789, it was not until 1808 that this separate office on the British pattern was set up. In that year John Ferguson was appointed the first Irish Superintendent of Mail-coaches and Surveyor at a salary of £200 assisted by two clerks at £80 and £70 per annum respectively. As with the British Post Office these salaries did not represent the full extent of the remuneration. Ferguson received a substantial supplement from the profits on the sale of money orders while both his clerks received smaller additional emoluments.[1] The Irish Mail-coach Office came in for criticism almost as soon as it was formed. The Ninth Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Fees, Perquisites and Emoluments ... in certain Public Offices in Ireland published in 1810 commented unfavourably upon the extravagence of setting up such an office in view of the limited extent of the mail-coach mileage in that part of the United Kingdom. They felt that such duties as existed could be performed by a clerk in the Secretary's office in Dublin and the operation of the network supervised by existing Riding Surveyors. Despite this response no attempt was made to abolish the office or reform its mode of operation. Further criticism from a parliamentary committee was levelled in 1829. It was pointed out that the Mail-coach Office undertook no work in connection with the negotiation of contracts as this was carried out by the Secretary's department or the Postmasters-General, they failed to provide effective inspection and supervision outside Dublin, and admitted their lack of competence to carry out the inspection of mail-coaches. Even the Secretary of the Irish Post Office, Sir Edward Lees, was critical of the arrangement declaring the £400 salary and emoluments of the Superintendent of Mail-coaches an "unnecessary expense" and an "extravagant charge." In comparison to the London Mail-coach Office this

1. POR Post 59/25; BPP 1810(366) X 94 p17; 1822(195) XVIII 409; 1829(353) XII 1 p62; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 pp 81, 217

was undoubtedly true. In 1810 the Irish Mail-coach Office with a staff of three controlled 1,582 miles of mail-coach route (1 member of staff for every 527.3 miles). In the rest of the United Kingdom a staff of seven, two of whom were at the London office less than half the time, controlled 7,994 miles of route (1 member of staff for every 1099.1 miles). For 1830 the comparable figures are, in Dublin one member of staff for every 704 miles and in London one member for 1103 miles of route. This overstaffing was to be found not only in the Irish Mail-coach Office. On the absorption of the Irish Post Office into that of the United Kingdom in 1831, Augustus Godby, formerly Secretary to the Scottish head office in Edinburgh, was transferred to Dublin in a similar capacity. He reported that there were "a vast number more officers and people employed than were necessary". He was able to reduce the establishment from 242 to 193 and the salary bill from £21,028 to £19,328. One of the victims of this cutback was the now redundant Irish Mail-coach Office. Thereafter all contracts were negotiated from London and timebills sent there for checking. The only officers concerned with mail-coaches in Ireland after 1831 were two Deputy Superintendents whose function was to regulate the operation of the coaches, and from 1835 a Resident Superintendent was established in Dublin.[1]

Outside London the regulation of postal traffic had been, since their first appointment in 1715, the duty of three Post Office Surveyors responsible to the President of the Inland Office and through him to the Secretary of the Post Office. When Palmer initiated his plan in 1784 the number of Surveyors was still at the same level despite the substantial increase in postal traffic since the beginning of the century. As officers working under the control of the hostile Secretary, Anthony Todd, they were of no value to Palmer for the regulation of his coaches. All the time that his service was operated solely to and from London he could exercise some control from

1. WSRO Goodwood 1550; BPP 1810(366) X 94 p17; 1829(353) XII 1 pp 62-66; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 pp 81,217; 1835(443) XLVIII 313 p14; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 30 p69, Appendix 55 p103

his Lombard Street office, but when in April 1785 he introduced his first cross mail-coach route from Bristol to Portsmouth he felt the need to employ his own Surveyor to exercise control, and Francis Freeling was appointed to this post. In October of the same year, following the rapid expansion of the mail-coach network, Palmer appointed two further Surveyors, one to control the West of England and the other South Wales and the adjacent districts. By January 1787 Palmer as Surveyor and Comptroller-General was firmly in control of the distribution of inland mails and he set his eyes on the improvement of their supervision. He suggested to the Treasury a permanent establishment of six Surveyors, two who had been in office before 1784 and four of his own nominees, pointing out that apart from the increase in mail conveyance there were now nearly 700 postmasters to be superintended "many of them extremely ignorant of their duty." Each Surveyor was to have responsibility for a defined region and was to live centrally in the area he controlled.[1] Palmer's suggestion was approved and the Post Office Surveyors appointed continued to regulate mail-coaches as well as their other duties until the new establishment of 1797, which set up the separate Mail-coach Office under Thomas Hasker. Thereafter regulation of the operation of mail-coaches became the responsibility of the Mail-coach Office and Post Office Surveyors confined their supervision to horse and foot posts and deputy postmasters. The supervising staff concerned with mail-coaches after 1797 consisted of two Deputy Superintendents of Mail-coaches, and to reinforce these, five Assistant Superintendents were appointed. Like the Surveyors, the Deputy and Assistant Superintendents were given regional responsibilities. Of the seven, two were stationed in London, and one each at Edinburgh, Carlisle, Manchester, Birmingham and Exeter. Two additional Assistant Superintendents were appointed in March 1839. By the early 1830s the title used for these officials was beginning to change to that of Inspector of Mail-coaches for the two senior members and Assistant Inspectors for the remainder.[2]

1. POR Post 96/22/5; Post 97/6/99; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 70 pp 72-74

2. POR Post 1/48/335; Post 59/36; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 p37; 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 44 p265; 1837(70) XXIV Part I 263 Appendix 58 pp 108-09

The duties of the Deputy and Assistant Superintendents were virtually identical. They instructed new guards in their duties, and generally supervised the operation of the mail-coach routes within their areas, ensuring that times were adhered to and regulations obeyed. This supervision applied not only to the guards, who were Post Office employees, but also to the contractors who horsed the coaches and the coachmen they employed. In the case of accidents and poor time-keeping they investigated the causes and reported to the Mail-coach Office in London, and were expected to supply a routine weekly report regardless of any exceptional occurences. They might also in the case of dispute with the contractors over the mileage allowance for horsing the mails, be obliged to measure lengths of road. They were expected to be on the road at least three days a week and often five, and their salary was so arranged that they did not maximise their earnings unless they were active in this matter. They travelled on the mail-coaches, and equally with the crews suffered the discomforts of winter travel and the illness consequent upon it.[1]

The salary allowed to the two Deputy Superintendents was £100 per annum, while the five Assistants received only the same pay as a mail-coach guard i.e. 10-6d a week. These low salaries were however supplemented from the travelling allowance paid for every day on the road. This was pitched higher than necessary to encourage the supervisory staff to travel. Palmer had found that prior to January 1787 Post Office Surveyors travelled as little as possible as they had a high fixed salary from which they were expected to find their travelling expenses. To encourage them to travel more he promptly arranged for their salaries to be cut to a third of their former levels, and a generous allowance of a guinea a day when travelling was provided as compensation. The success of this move was not forgotten when the salaries and allowances

1. POR Post 1/48/335; Post 59/39/136; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 82 p443; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 5 p33; 1837(70) XXIV Part I 263 Appendix 30 p69, Appendix 58 pp 108-09

of Deputy and Assistant Superintendents of Mail-coaches were fixed. The travelling allowance fluctuated, but for most of the period to 1840 it was in the range 15s to 18s a day, and it was expected that from this a profit of at least 5s a day would result after all expenses were cleared.[1]

The Deputy and Assistant Superintendents of Mail-coaches were without exception recruited from the ranks of Mail-coach guards. Promotion was on the basis of merit and Freeling was of the opinion that "the holding out of these appointments is an encouragement to Guards to behave properly." Those promoted from guard to Superintendent had often completed about ten years service in the former rank but in a number of cases four or less years was deemed sufficient. Once promoted to the Rank of Superintendent they often remained in this position until death or retirement on pension. Seven Superintendents appointed between November 1799 and July 1829 had retired or died by April 1840 with an average of 5 years 7 months service as a guard and 25 years 11 months service as a Superintendent. Retiring staff had an entitlement under an Act of 1810[2] to a pension equal to two thirds of their salary and emoluments provided they were over sixty years old and had completed fifteen years of service.[3]

The dual system of supervisory staff, Surveyors to control horse and foot posts and Superintendents to control mail-coaches, was criticised as wasteful in 1829 by a Parliamentary committee which investigated Post Office finances. Surveyors had supervised mail-coach operation prior to 1797 when the Mail-coach Office was set up, and were clearly after this date concerned with the efficient operation of coaches as the cross posts and

1. POR Post 1/24/124, Post 1/54/294; Post 10/68; Post 59/36, Post 59/39/9; Post 97/6/99; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 70 p72; 1829(161) XI 1 p37; 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 44 p265; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 5 p33; 1836(111) XLV 373 p4

2. 50 Geo III c117

3. POR Post 35/9/205, Post 35/11/28; Post 58/53

and branches that they supervised had to connect with them. The Commissioners who reported in 1829 stated:

> "It appears to us, that a plan of superintendence which assigns to officers of different class and powers the inspection of detatched portions of the same route merely on the grounds of a difference in the method of conveyance is ill-calculated for the purpose of general control."

They also commented unfavourably on the salaries of the Mail-coach Superintendents and clearly felt that officers who received no more in pay than those they supervised could not claim the superiority necessary to exercise a controlling function. They suggested the combination of the Surveyors and Superintendents into a single grade which like the Surveyors would report through the Secretary to the Post Office Board. This would seem eminently logical, but was never put into effect, probably because the existing scheme, illogical to the outsider, worked effectively. The Superintendents being ex-guards had more experience of coach operation, and being knowledgeable in the habits and problems of the operating staff and contractors, were better qualified to supervise this part of the service. If the two grades had been merged no doubt the number of staff might have been reduced, but as Surveyors were paid £300 per annum and the Commissioners saw a similar rate being paid in future to all supervising officers, it is unlikely that any reduction in cost would have been achieved.[1]

In Ireland supervision of mail-coaches up to the union of the two Post Offices in 1831 followed a different pattern. When the Irish Mail-coach Office was set up in 1808 the Superintendent was employed at a salary of £200 per annum and an allowance paid in addition to cover expenses when travelling to supervise the operation of services. This latter allowance however ceased in 1810 as it was adversely commented upon in the Ninth Report of the Parliamentary Commissioners on Fees and Gratuities. In compensation the Superintendent's salary

1. POR Post 58/63; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 pp 33-35

was raised to £369-4-8d, but as he now had to finance his own travelling expenses he journeyed from Dublin only "on special emergencies leaving the ordinary business which was discharged by him altogether unprovided for." No doubt this resulted in additional burdens on the District Surveyors who now had the sole supervision of mail-coaches in addition to horse and foot posts and deputy postmasters. After the union of the Irish and British Post Offices a system was adopted in Ireland similar to that in the remainder of the British Isles, with two Deputy Superintendents of Mail-coaches with a salary of £80 per annum each plus a travelling allowance, supplemented in October 1835 by the appointment of a Resident Inspector of Mail-coaches in Dublin at a salary of £120 per annum. He had general control over the guards, and supervision of the contractors and coach operation and also examined timebills.[1]

1. BPP 1829(353) XI 1 pp 62-63; 1834(20) XLIX 445; 1837(70) XXXIV Part I 263 Appendix 30 p69

Chapter 6 - Operating Staff

The relatively small number of staff employed by the Mail-coach Department of the Post Office to administer and supervise its services, was matched by an operating staff which equally appears small in relation to the needs of a national network of services. At no time did the operational staff employed directly by the Post Office in both Britain and Ireland reach 400 in number.[1] From the commencement of the service it had been the policy of John Palmer to utilise existing coaching facilities and expertise for the conveyance of mails rather than establish a rival competing organisation which would have invited retaliation by existing operators. The passenger and parcel conveyance was left entirely in the hands of the coach proprietors who were to employ their own coachmen. Only the guard was a Post Office employee, and his primary function was to provide security for the mail and to act as a check on the contractor and his coachman to ensure the efficient operation of the service. The initial rapid build up of routes from 1785 dictated the employment of 130 mail-coach guards in England, Scotland and Wales by 1787. Numbers rose steadily thereafter in parallel with the network expansion until about 1820 in which year they numbered 265. Thereafter the number of operating staff remained steady until the late 1830s when numbers began to fall in response to a cutback in recruitment of new staff. In 1836 52 new guards had been appointed and in 1837 an additional 40. By 1838 the figure had fallen to 25 and was to continue to fall in successive years until 1841 when only four new guards were appointed and the next year when it was only one. It might have been expected that additional guards might have been required in connection with the increase in branch and secondary routes that occurred in the 1830s, but many of these routes were operated by two horse coaches that carried no guard. Mails were under the control of the coachman in a locked fore-boot. In 1839 such routes numbered 33 and two years later had risen to 58.[2]

1. See table 40 p 188

2. POR Post 30/80/1681/1851; Post 59/42/137; BPP 1841(431) XXVI 381 pp 9,19; 1843(564) VIII 1 Appendix 39 p261

Table 40 - Number of guards employed by the Mail-coach Departments of the Post Office.

Date	England, Scotland & Wales	Ireland	United Kingdom Total	Sources
1787	130	-	130	POR Post 97/7/211
1789		10		POR Post 15/154/158
1791	140			POR Post 1/15/193; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 85-86
1792	147			POR Post 10/1/16
1797	193			POR Post 59/30
1820	265			Ibid
1832	241			POR Post 1/39/304
1835	262	85	347	BPP 1835(442) XLVIII 357 pp 17,20

Date	England, Scotland & Wales			Ireland			United Kingdom	Source
	Road	Rail	Total	Road	Rail	Total		
1838	268	24	292	79	4	83	375	
1841	200	60	260	74	3	77	337	POR Post 30/ 80/1681/1851
1845			228			75	303	
1848	74	116	190	66	4	70	260	
1850			165			54	219	POR Post 59/48/13

Increased speeds by this date were also enabling guards to operate over greater distances in the same working period. These factors are clearly reflected in the figures of the ratio of mail-coach guards to distance operated shown in table 41 p189. Initially mails were sent by railway in the charge of a Post Office guard but this seemed an extravagence on short feeder routes, and as early as 1842 the Post Office were forwarding mails from Glasgow to Ayr in the charge of the railway compnay's guard. This was no great innovation however, as the guards of stage-coaches conveying mails had taken similar responsibilities. In 1843 railway guards were responsible for the care of mail on ten routes but the Post Office were sceptical about the desirability

Table 41 - Ratio of guards employed to the distance operated 1787-1835

Year	England, Scotland & Wales			Ireland		
	No. of guards	Length of mail-coach route	Miles of route per guard	No. of guards	Length of mail-coach route	Miles of route per guard
1787	130	6824	52.5			
1789				10	542	54.2
1792	147	9190	62.5			
1820	265	15454	58.3			
1835	262	18266	69.7	85	5364	63.1

Sources: Figures extracted from table 40 p188 and Appendix 4 pp 372-426

of the system being extended, as it was feared that the additional duties would be carried out by the railway guard to the neglect of the safety of passengers and"it would be the means of drawing down upon the Post Office the blame of accidents." Treasury pressure did however result in the extension of the use of railway guards and a corresponding reduction in the number of Post Office guards required.[1] In 1848 offers of re-deployment, gratuities or early pensions were made as inducements to redundant guards to resign their positions. Such measures and natural wastage had by 1850 reduced the number of guards in England, Scotland and Wales to 165, a fall of 43.5% on the 1838 figure.[2]

In Ireland the first ten mail-coach guards were not appointed until 1788 and by the mid 1830s 85 were being employed. This latter period corresponds with the peak of employment of mail guards in England, Scotland and Wales but in Ireland it is likely that the number of guards employed was less in the mid 1830s than it had been earlier. The civil unrest and rebellion during and immediately after the Napoleonic Wars made

1. POR Post 1/69/338; Post 30/80/1681/1851; BPP 1843(72) LIII 347 p6

2. POR Post 1/84/234; Post 30/80/1681/1851

it necessary to place double guards on mail-coaches, and in some areas up to four guards, as the coaches became one of the main targets for anti-government feeling. In 1820 the discontinuance of this double guarding was declared to be saving £42 a week, a sum that would have been sufficient for the employment of around 70 additional guards. This would suggest the use of around 150 mail-coach guards in Ireland in 1820 compared with only 165 for the whole of the remainder of the United Kingdom. Double guarding had to be resorted to once again on certain routes in 1823 and 1824.[1] In Ireland railway development came later than in the rest of the United Kingdom and in 1848 only four mail guards were employed on railway duty in Ireland compared with 116 in the remainder of the United Kingdom, while Ireland had only eight fewer guards on road duties than in England, Scotland and Wales. Numbers did however start to fall off rapidly after 1848.[2]

The position of a Post Office mail-coach guard was one carrying status and providing very adequate financial reward for its occupant, and applicants always greatly exceeded the number of posts available.[3] The Post Office could therefore dictate and enforce strict qualification criteria. Applicants had to be under the age of 30, "able to read and write plainly", of robust health and previous experience with horses and carriages was regarded as desirable. They needed a satisfactory character from their last employer or a "responsible person" and had to find two householders prepared to stand surety, the penalty for breaking the bond being £50 in the 1830s.[4] These were minimum qualifications and did not necessarily lead to appointment. Much depended on the person endorsing the application. Of those recommended between 1831 and 1834 the application was

1. POR Post 15/157/142, Post 15/157/301, Post 15/157/359
2. See table 40 p 188
3. See p 187
4. POR Transport Road - Transport 18 - Mail-coaches; Edmund Vale, The Mail-Coach Men of the Late Eighteenth Century (1960) p56

endorsed in 57 cases by members of the aristocracy, in 36 cases by M.P.s while many of the others were supported by the gentry. Where the writers of the letters of recommendation were unknown they were rejected. Even if the application was accepted appointment was seldom immediate. Names were added to an application list which at times became so long that it had to be closed. In February 1812 there were nearly 40 names on the list and it was taking an average of two years between application and appointment, and at the end of the year Francis Freeling was obliged to inform the Postmasters-General that the appointments list was closed and "several persons about whom your Lordships personal friends have interested themselves are waiting its re-opening". Of the 42 applicants accepted for the waiting list in 1831 only 14 were appointed in that year, 11 the next, 5 in 1833 and one had to wait till 1834. The situation was similar in the years following and several obtained situations elsewhere rather than wait. During the 1840s new appointments were few as the establishment for mail guards declined.[1] Palmer's original intention was to give preference to discharged soldiers as they would be familiar with firearms and used to discipline, but this does not appear to have been implemented. Those appointed came mainly from backgrounds that had an obvious relevance to the duties required because of experience with horses (e.g. farmer, groom), or had previously been employed in duties which gave them the oportunity to obtain the endorsement of a person of consequence (e.g. servant). A number of Post Office

1. POR Post 35/9/31, Post 35/9/330, Post 35/10/10, Post 35/10/46, Post 35/20/126; WSRO Goodwood 1478/20, Goodwood 1556

staff also transferred from other employment in the service. The range of backgrounds was however wide and included small manufacturers and merchants, clerks, schoolmasters, skilled craftsmen and even persons claiming professional skills. One thing they had in common. They were virtually all between 20 and 30 years of age on appointment. Only one person younger than that age and 23 above it were listed among the 357 names recorded in the general appointments book for the period 1798 to 1845.[1]

The prime duty of a mail-coach guard, as his name suggests, was the security of the mail under his charge. To this end the coach had a locked compartment in which the mails were to be placed and the guard supplied with a blunderbuss and a pair of pistols to resist attack. He was responsible for delivering the mail bags to the post offices designated, and picking up outward mail from them. He was provided with a detailed timebill and a locked timepiece in order that the coach schedule could be regidly adhered to, and was to report his coachman or the horsing contractors if any delay occurred due to their neglect. Assistance to the passengers was a secondary consideration in the eyes of the Post Office, and he was ordered to assist the coachman but only if such help was "consistent with his situation as protector of the Mails". Should the coach break down on the road the guard was expected to effect temporary repairs, and on appointment was required to spend a fortnight at the Mail-coach Manufactory to learn this aspect of his duties. He carried on the coach a specified kit of tools and spare parts which with his firearms

1. POR Post 58/53; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1874 p361

Table 42 - Former occupations of persons appointed as guards in the Mail-coach Department 1798-1845

Former occupation	Number formerly employed in this occupation	Percentage of total guards appointed
Farmer	38	10.7%
Servant	36	10.1%
Coachman	27	7.6%
Groom	19	5.4%
Stage-coach guard	19	5.4%
Carpenter	10	2.8%
Grocer	8	2.3%
Driver of a mail cart	7	2%
Butcher	7	2%
Waiter	7	2%
Mail horse rider	6	1.7%
Chemist and druggist	6	1.7%
Sadler	6	1.7%
Baker	6	1.7%
Storeman	5	1.5%
Gamekeeper	5	1.5%
Letter carrier	5	1.5%
Stage-coach driver	5	1.5%
Other occupations	133	36.9%

Source: POR Post 58/53

were to be inspected weekly by the postmaster from whom he drew his wages. The mail guard was however only permitted to spend half an hour on such repairs if the coach was heading for London and an hour to an hour and a half on other services. If the repair had not been effected within this time limit he was to desert the coach and make his way forward with the mails. The same duty applied if the coach was caught in deep snow or prevented by floods from proceeding. In such cases he could remove one of the horses from the coach and even hire a post chaise from the innkeepers along the road who usually horsed the mails. Mail guards took the duty to get the mail through seriously, and many instances are known where considerable endurance and bravery were displayed in delivering mails in appalling winter conditions. In February 1831 the guard and driver of the Edinburgh to Dumfries

mail-coach died of exposure trying to get the mails forward on foot. During the Napoleonic Wars guards were additionally required to be on the lookout for French prisoners of war who had broken their parole. A detailed printed list running to 25 paragraphs laying out their duties was supplied annually as a reminder.[1]

How effective were the guards in maintaining security and conforming to the time schedule laid down? As far as England, Scotland and Wales were concerned, security of the mails improved markedly with the introduction of the mail-coach and its armed guard. Previously the unarmed postboy had been an easy target for highway robbery, and after attempts in the early 1770s to provide theft-proof mail carts had failed, Post Office officials seemed to have become resigned to the fact that such attacks would continue and that to arm postboys might merely result in their murder if they attempted to resist.[2] The introduction of the mail-coach in 1784 however completely changed the situation. Its speed alone made it a difficult vehicle to rob, while the height of the vehicle gave the armed guard a position of advantage from which to defend the mails should this become necessary. An attempt by a highwayman to hold up a mail-coach at Gunnersbury Lane on the outskirts of London in October 1786 resulted in the guard shooting and killing the man involved.[3] The only other

1. POR Post 10/5/1, Post 10/5/4, Post 10/6/74, Post 10/6/132; R.C. & J.M. Anderson, Quicksilver: A Hundred Years of Coaching 1750-1850(Newton Abbot 1975) pp 159-64; A.R.B. Haldane, Three Centuries of the Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) pp 84-85; Vale op cit p56

2. See pp 63-68, Appendix 2 pp 368-69

3. Drewry's Derby Mercury No 2042 26 Oct - 2 Nov 1786

attempts at holding up mail-coaches on the highway that are known cover the periods from 1804-06 and 1809-20 when 12 instances were reported of obstructions such as trees, gates, carts, ploughs and harrows being placed across roads at night with the intention that the mail-coach should collide with them.[1] In two cases the coach horses crashed into the obstructions and were injured and in one of these cases the coach was overturned. No attempt at robbery appears to have taken place however, and the obstructions may well have been a gesture of anti-government feeling or frustration at privation brought on by economic change and depression. The incidents have a wide territorial spread and appear to have followed no particular pattern.[2] Theft of mail carried by mail-coaches was infrequent and in the period before 1801, in which year mail cart drivers and horse riders were at last armed, much lower than mails carried by these means, despite the fact that the potential pickings from mail-coach robberies were much higher than those possible on these secondary feeder services. During the period 1784 to 1801 only three successful robberies from mail-coaches occurred in Britain. In 1788 three bags of mail were stolen from the Manchester mail-coach at Knutsford while the guard was absent delivering mail to the post office, while in February 1794 a bag was snatched while the Norwich mail-coach was leading at the G.P.O. in Lombard Street, London and in October of the same

1. 1804 1 instance, 1806 1 instance, 1809 1 instance, 1811 1 instance, 1812 3 instances, 1815 1 instance, 1817 1 instance, 1818 1 instance, 1819 1 instance, 1820 1 instance and 1 later occurance in 1835. POR Post 10/5/45, Post 10/5/54, Post 10/5/61, Post 10/6/72, Post 10/6/75, Post 10/6/79, Post 10/6/104, Post 10/6/111, Post 10/6/117, Post 10/6/121; Post 35/9/260, Post 35/20/361; Post 74/204

2. The counties involved are: Lancashire 2 instances, Monmouthshire 2 instances, and one each in Bedfordshire, Dumfrieshire, Glamorganshire, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Westmorland and Yorkshire.

year bags were stolen from the mail box of the Bristol coach when it was carelessly left unlocked by the guard.[1] During this same period robberies from mail carts and horse riders were still far too frequent. In the five years 1797 to 1801 alone 15 cases of such theft occurred[2] whereas no instances are known of mail-coaches being robbed in the same period. The subsequent pattern of mail-coach robberies follow a similar form to those before 1801. The main factor was the lack of vigilance or neglect by the guard. Mail boxes were left unlocked, guards deserted their allocated position at the rear of the mail-coach to sit next to the driver for companionship leaving the mail box unguarded, and mail bags were dropped accidentally en route and subsequently rifled. In all for the period 1802 to 1837 only nine instances have been located of mails stolen from coaches, three instances of parcels stolen from mail-coaches and three instances of mail bags accidentally dropped and pillaged are also known. Hauls in cases of successful robbery could however be high. In one instance in 1823 £20,000 in banknotes was stolen.[3]

Ireland however presented an entirely different picture. Rebellion, anti-British feeling and economic distress leading to

1. POR Post 10/25/15, Post 10/26/66; Post 97/5/320; Evening Mail No 876 8-10 Oct 1794

2. 1797 3 cases, 1798 2 cases, 1799 1 cases, 1800 4 cases, 1801 4 cases. The regional distribution is wide: Lancashire 5 cases, Kent 3 cases, Sussex 2 cases, East Midlands 2 cases, Yorkshire 1 case, Hampshire 1 case and Hertfordshire 1 case. POR Post 1/19/293

3. POR Post 1/24/333; Post 10/5/52, Post 10/6/66, Post 10/6/71, Post 10/6/105, Post 10/11; Post 30/33/E1044Z/1837; Post 35/9/264; John Copeland, Roads and Their Traffic 1750-1850(Newton Abbot 1968) p 129

acts of violence marked much of Irish history in the last decades of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth century. Postal traffic, because of its connection with the government and chance of financial reward, was a frequent object of attack. In the period 1824 to 1837 only nine robberies of the mails were recorded for England and Wales (6.9 per decade) and for the period 1801 to 1837 only ten robberies for Scotland (3.6 per decade). In Ireland however between June 1801 and December 1837 410 cases of robbery of the mails occurred (112.3 per decade) and of these violence was used in all but six cases.

Table 43 - Number of mail robberies in Ireland 1801-37

Period	Number of mail robberies	Average number per anum
1801[1]-05	69	15.3
1806-10	66	13.2
1811-15	76	15.2
1816-20	68	13.6
1821-25	70	14
1826-30	37	7.4
1831-35	16	3.2
1836-37	8	4

Source: POR Post 30/33/E1044Z/1837

Note: 1. Period commenced June 1801

Some of the robberies were of mail-coaches on the road though most were of horse posts. Many more mail-coaches were attacked without success. Between June 1801 and 1837 48 attacks were made on mail-coaches and five on mail cars, the great majority of which were unsuccessful.

Table 44 - Attacks on mail-coaches and cars in Ireland 1801-37

Period	Mail-coaches attacked	Mail cars attacked	Average number of attacks per annum
1801[1]-05	5		1.1
1806-10	7		1.4
1811-15	12		2.4
1816-10	11		2.2
1821-25	8	1	1.8
1826-30	4	1	1
1831-35	1	2	0.6
1836-37	-	1	0.5

Source: POR Post 30/33/E1044Z/1837

Note: 1. Period commenced June 1801

The frequency and violence of the attacks on mail-coaches and horse posts in Ireland necessitated security measures well in excess of those found necessary in the rest of the United Kingdom. Mail-coaches for long periods on many routes carried two guards and at times as many as four guards were employed on some coach services. Police and military escorts had to be provided on some routes in addition. Although the frequency of the attacks declined from the mid 1820s it was necessary as late as 1832 to employ two guards on the Dublin to Newry mail-coach stages and referring to Ireland generally in the same year, Mr Johnson, the Mail-coach Superintendent, expressed himself "prepared to put on a double guard on any mail-coach when danger is apprehended".[1]

1. POR Post 15/157/247, Post 15/157/306, Post 15/157/342; Post 30/33/E1044Z/1837; BPP 1829(353) XII 1 Appendix 10 p145; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p86; 1857 1st session(2195) IV 293 p60

The rebellion of 1798 was a particularly difficult time for mail-coach contractors. John Anderson had to be compensated for the loss of 27 horses stolen by the rebels in addition to harness and equipment. He also received £3,249-17-10d compensation for loss of earnings as it was admitted that

> "the frequent robbery and destruction of mail coaches during the Rebellion gave such an impression of their insecurity that for a length of time they certainly were not used either as a conveyance for persons or property".

Troubles did not end with the defeat of the rebels at Vinegar Hill. In the years that followed mail-coaches were all too frequently ambushed by parties of armed insurgents, in one case reported as 11 strong. It was only by considerable determination and at risk to the coach crews that they managed in most cases to foil the attacks. Several guards and coachmen were severly wounded, one of the guards of the Limerick to Dublin mail-coach of 20 July 1808 having twelve balls in different parts of his body after an ambush by an "armed bandetti". Claims were made on several occassions by guards that attackers were killed. Violent attacks of this nature on mail-coaches were thankfully confined to Ireland and not experienced in other parts of the United Kingdom.[1]

The effectiveness of the guard in maintaining the time schedules depended upon the degree of control that he was prepared to exert over the coachman and the servants of the horsing contractors. There was a temptation, especially in inclement winter conditions, for guards to connive at unofficial stops for refreshment and Charles Johnson, giving evidence before a Parliamentary select

1. POR Post 15/155/36, Post 15/155/122, Post 15/155/143, Post 15/155/149, Post 15/155/293; Post 30/33/E1044Z/1837

committee in March 1828 complained of coach crews

> "Stopping at public-houses, and going into those public-houses, that is the great irregularity; the coachman more particularly, are very apt to do it, the principal thing we had to complain of lately is loss of time."

Post Office guards were strictly ordered to report coachmen who made such unauthorised stops or horsing contractors who failed to change the team within the allotted time of five minutes. Few such reports appear to have been made however and such delays were often made up on the road.[1] A much more important factor in delaying mail-coaches were poor roads and inclement weather, and over these the guards had no control. Until the road improvements of the 1820s based on the "scientific" methods of road construction advocated by Telford, Macadam and fellow "road engineers" mail-coaches experienced difficulties in maintaining times in winter and the Post Office were obliged to accept some degree of late running.[2] From the 1820s complaints are less frequent as road surfaces and alignments were substantially improved. Individual roads could provide problems still and delayed the services operating along them. In 1831 the London to Milford Haven coach had a poor timekeeping record. On 64.8% of the journeys the coach arrived at Milford over an hour beyond the scheduled time, and delays of over two hours were experienced on 6.6% of the journeys. Such services were however probably exceptions. The other Irish mail from London, that to Holyhead along the line of Telford's parliamentary route, was from 5 April 1819 due to arrive at Holyhead at 8 a.m. after a 261 mile journey from London. In the period from this date until 3 June 1819 its latest arrival

1. BPP 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 81 p442; Anderson op cit pp 159, 161
2. See pp 145-53, 160-63

time was 8.25 a.m. On 31 occasions it was early, once clipping a full hour from the schedule. Of the 57 journeys, 41 were within 15 minutes either way of the arrival time and only two were more than 15 minutes late. The Liverpool to Holyhead service displayed a very similar performance over the same period. London to Bristol, London to Bath via Devizes and Bristol to Oxford coaches in December 1826 displayed similar regularity.

Arrival times at Bath

Bristol-Oxford Mail-coach			London-Bristol Mail-coach			London-Bath via Devizes Mail-coach		
Early	On time	Late	Early	On time	Late	Early	On time	Late
-	26	3	-	22	7	1	23	5

Coaches deemed to be on time if the arrival was within ten minutes of the scheduled time.

Most of the late running was accounted for by Sunday journeys, on which day there was no mail distribution and therefore schedules were by tradition relaxed. Even in Ireland, where some deficient sections of main road still survived into the early 1830s, most of the mail-coaches at this period were keeping good time.[1]

Prior to 1837 mail-coach guards were paid a relatively low salary and were expected to derive a considerable portion of their income from tips. Palmer initially in 1783 envisaged a salary for guards of 14/- a week, but in the event a lower level was adopted from the atart. A basic wage of 13/- a week was provided from which 2/6[2] was deducted to cover the cost of supplying uniforms and funding a scheme to provide for medical expenses, sickness benefit and a pension. This scale continued unchanged until 1837 when an alternative salary scale was introduced.

1. POR Post 10/1/28a; BPP 1819(548) V 157 Appendix 1 p82; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p82, Appendix 13 p333

2. Initially 3/-

Even then many of the guards continued to be paid on the old basis. The general rise in wage rates during the Napoleonic Wars was not reflected in the wages paid to guards though in May 1813 they did petition for an increase. This was refused as candidates for appointment were still in excess of the number of vacancies.[1] In Ireland a wage of 10/6d a week was adopted in 1788 for the first appointment of mail guards but by the next year 11/4½d was being paid and this remained the standard rate until 1810. Thereafter rates varied from route to route, on some services as much as 17/6d a week being offered. With the union of the British and Irish Post Offices in 1831 however, a standard rate was once more adopted. This was fixed at 13/-, higher by 2/6d than that of the rest of the United Kingdom, because of the smaller number of passengers travelling and the lower income from tips.[2] By 1837 this method of payment was producing problems. Already mails were being conveyed on the Liverpool and Manchester and Grand Junction Railways, and ~~by~~ a curricle post, which did not convey passengers, had been established in 1830 between Morpeth and Edinburgh. The guards on these services had no chance of receiving passenger gratuities. Guards of mails conveyed by railway were therefore paid £1-1s a week and the curricle guards £1-10s later reduced to £1-1s. With the imminent opening of a number of new services by rail it was clearly time to re-think the wages structure. Treasury consent was therefore sought and received in 1837 for a new wages scale for railway mail guards. This commenced

1. BRL B383 Acc No 32:1872 p211, B383 Acc No 32:1874 p357; POR Post 1/12/200; Post 35/10/467

2. POR Post 15/154/158, Post 15/154/169, Post 15/156/191; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p83

at £70 per annum, rising after three years to £100 per annum, then after ten years service to £115 per annum, with a maximum of £130 after 15 years service. As the earnings of mail-coach guards were effected by the withdrawl of many of the more remunerative routes they too were offered in 1838 the chance of opting for the new scale provided they agreed no longer to accept passenger gratuities. Many opted to do so. The Treasury however came to the conclusion that the Post Office had been over-generous to its employees and from 24 August 1842 ordered the suspension of further promotion under the scale.[1] New salary scales for all guards were introduced in 1856 providing for two classes. The first class, limited to 60 guards, was to commence at £100 per annum rising by £1-10s a year to a maximum of £120, while the second class started at £70 per annum and rose by £1 a year to £90.[2] A similar system of payment to that of mail guards prior to the 1837 salary scales, was used by stage-coach proprietors for the payment of their guards. Proprietors paid a salary of between 10/6 and 15/- a week but like the Post Office they expected a large proportion of income to be derived from gratuities. On many routes income from gratuities was such that guards could no doubt have been obtained without the payment of salary, but proprietors felt that such payment made the status of the guard as a company servant clear and therefore aided discipline.[3]

1. POR Post 1/48/163, Post 1/65/175; Post 30/80/1681/1851; Post 59/39/9, Post 59/42/137

2. POR Post 58/55; BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p13

3. BPP 1835(313) LVIII 399 Appendix 19 p79

The true extent of the earnings from tips is not easy to calculate and must have varied from route to route and stage to stage depending on the volume of passenger traffic. The Post Office appear to have adopted a policy of promoting experienced and trustworthy guards to more remunerative routes and stages. Writers who have pronounced on the subject of income from tips have not agreed with one another. Harper suggested that a guard expected 2/6 from inside passengers and 2/- from outside passengers providing 16/- a trip and that this might result in an income from tips and fees of between £300 and £500 per annum. Hart suggests 1/6 to 2/- tip for the coachman and 2/6 for the guard at each change of crew, while Vale states that 1/- was the usual tip and 6d would be sufficient if the journey was under 30 miles, a figure confirmed by Corbett.[1] William Chaplin, who as a coach proprietor ought to have been aware of the facts, declared in April 1835 to a Parliamentary select committee that on the Manchester mail-coach some passengers

> "give perhaps half-a-crown, he would not give less, or if he does, the guard looks at him very hard; the guard does not expect to get less than half-a-crown when he gets to Leicester, and then he expects the same again at Manchester".[2]

Although this statement seems to confirm that of Harper regarding the amount of the tip expected, the figure for income from this source of between £300 and £500 per annum must be doubted.[3] In a petition to the Postmaster-General for the implementation of the salary scale frozen in 1842 by the Treasury, and signed by Joseph

1. Edward Corbett, An Old Coachman's Chatter(1890) p30; Charles G. Harper, Stage Coach and Mail in Days of Yore (1903)Vol 1 p253; Harold W. Hart, "Some Notes on Coach Travel 1750-1848" The Journal of Transport History Vol IV No 3 (May 1960) p156; Vale op cit pp 186-87

2. BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 19 p79

3. On the basis of 16/- a trip which Harper suggests, assuming six journeys a week for 52 weeks the income would amount to £249-12s. Only on short stages or routes would a return journey occur the same day and for such journeys a tip as high as 2/6 could hardly be expected.

Hills and five other mail-coach guards, they claimed that in October 1838 their fees averaged between £150 and £200 per annum. As the petitioners were contrasting their past "fortune" with their present "plight" it is possible that these figures are exaggerated. George Stowe, the Mail-coach Superintendent declared in November 1842 that "it is a matter of notoriety that the Guards who are in receipt of the highest [salary scale] are not nearly so well off as when in receipt of Fees upon good Coaches".[1] As the highest rate of salary was £130 this might suggest an income from tips in excess of £100 per annum. It must however be noted that Stowe was referring to "good Coaches". For every part of a coach route that would produce an income of between £100 and £200 per annum in tips there were several others that would not.[2] This helps to explain why mail-guards opted in such strength for the new salary scales in preference to the old arrangement. In Ireland the guards as a body opted for the new scales despite the fact that railway competition was not an immediate threat - a clear indication of low earnings from tips. Even in England, Scotland and Wales by August 1842, 175 road guards had opted for the new scale and only 114 remained on the old basis. Those who did keep to the old arrangement were by the late 1840s finding their incomes from this source diminishing rapidly. Since the 1820s there had been a growing public resentment against the demands of coach staff for gratuities and as mail-coach guards on

1. POR Post 30/80/1681/1851

2. The income from fees may have been higher on stage-coaches as the passenger carrying capacity was greater. The extra passengers would however have been outsides and would have been expected to tip at a lower figure if at all. Mail-coach passengers, paying a premium fare, might have been expected to be reasonably generous tippers.

salary were strictly ordered to refuse gratuities and railway staff were similarly instructed, the public became less accustomed to such impositions and were inclined to refuse. By April 1848 gratuities from passengers on the Edinburgh to Aberdeen mail-coach had fallen to an average of only 10s-6d per guard a week, whereas in January they had still averaged £1-5-10d a week. On the Gloucester to Llandovery mail-coach fees had averaged £1-5-4d a week per guard in March 1848 but three years later were down to 16s-2d.[1]

If we assume that tips were in the range £100 to £200 per annum, this with the salary would suggest a weekly income of between £2-10s and £4-10s which would seem generous if compared with other groups of workers. It equalled or exceeded the salary paid to senior clerks in the Post Office[2] and was many times the wages paid to unskilled Post Office staff such as mail bag repairers (20/- a week) and porters (£23-8s per annum).[3] It ought however to be realised that mail-coach guards would often have to lodge for part of the week away from home and would have to provide themselves with meals on the journey. They might, to improve their earnings, have to take up duties in another part of the country with all the expenses consequent upon a move. If their route entered London or Dublin they would have to pay 26/- per annum to the Post Office armourer for the cleaning of weapons. Their arduous duties often in winter brought on sickness, or

1. POR Post 1/61/410; Post 30/80/1681/1851; W.C.A. Blew, Brighton and its Coaches (1894) pp 134-35
2. See table 38 p176
3. POR Post 1/39/304; see also table 38 p176

they might be injured in the execution of their duties and would have to exist on reduced sick pay. Nevertheless they clearly enjoyed, on routes that attracted heavy passenger traffic, an income in excess of many skilled and clerical workers and the status that went with it. The elimination of much of this road traffic and the subsequent reduction of income, was seen as a considerable blow to this prestige. Joseph Hill's petition of 1843. for the implementation in full of the increases in salary scale blocked by the Treasury, complained that the salary of mail-coach guards was little more than that of guards employed by railway companies. He clearly thought that mail-coach guards, because of what he regarded as their greater responsibilities, deserved more than railway guards.[1]

The only other legal advantages that the guard derived from his employment were fees for letters picked up or delivered at points between post towns, on which a penny appears to have been the usual fee. Such a service existed in the early 1790s and was allowed by the Post Office but no evidence has been found of its use at a later date.[2] Other attempts were made to increase income by private trading but these were all illegal and guards caught could be subject to dismissal or even criminal proceedings through the courts. Parcels, produce, game and even contraband could be conveyed as a private venture, and the mail box provided a safe place for stowage. In co-operation with the driver the fares

1. POR Post 1/64/386; Post 10/26/155; Post 30/80/1681/1851; Corbett, op cit p32
2. POR Post 97/5/11; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 139-40

of casual passengers, not entered on the way bill, picked up en route, could be pocketed or "shouldered". The income from such sources is problematical and there is no indication of how many mail guards felt it worth the risk to their employment to follow such practices. That some did and were detected is all that is certain.[1]

The employment of Post Office guard, exposed for many hours at a time to inclement weather conditions, was recognised as being ardûous. In addition the guard was very vulnerable in the case of accident and liable to be thrown violently from the coach. Such accidents and overturns due either to negligence or ill-fortune were not infrequent. In February 1795 it was reported that a third of the mail-coach guards were ill or absent from duty "either from the intenseness of the severe weather, or from colds they have caught in the floods." Early retirement through incapacity to continue employment because of ill-health or injury was common. Of 23 Irish mail-coach guards who were superannuated in the early 1830s only one was over the age of 60 and six were under the age of 50. The average age of retirement of this group was just over 51 years. A similar age of superannuation appears to have been usual in the rest of the United Kingdom.[2] Superannuation could only take place when the guard was certified as unfit for further duties by two medical practicioners. Often such medical reports emphasised the fact that the incapacity to continue work was

1. Copeland op cit p129; Harper op cit Vol I pp 255, 257; Vale op cit pp 55, 187, 214-15, 269

2. POR Post 1/40/189, Post 1/41/315; Evening Mail No 931 18-20 Feb 1795

related to the arduous nature of the work itself. In the case of William Hagen,[1] who had served as a mail guard for 21 years until September 1847, it was stated that he was suffering from "paralysis and general derangement of the system induced by exposure to cold and damp in the discharge of his duties". Such causes as "chronic rheumatism" and the consequences of "long exposure to inclement weather and of repeated injuries sustained ... in the performance of his official duties" are often cited as reasons for superannuation.[1]

The number of hours continuous duty expected of a mail-coach guard varied from route to route.[2] On some services the guard was expected to stay with the coach for the full length of a long journey. One of the more extreme examples of this was the Dublin to Limerick service, 119 miles in length and taking 14 hours in 1832. Three guards were employed on this route, two working and one resting. Charles Johnson, the Mail-coach Superintendent, when questioned about this particular duty by a Parliamentary select committee in March 1832 was asked if he did not consider this "rather a severe duty for a guard". He replied, "I think it is not more than robust men, as we expect all guards to be, are able to perform". George Louis, Johnson's successor, also defended long hours of duty for guards before a Parliamentary select committee three years later. Asked what distance guards would be given, he replied,

1. POR Post 1/68/280, Post 1/76/249, Post 1/85/98

2. Previous writers who have pronounced on the hours of work of guards have not arrived at a common conclusion. Harper I p253 has suggested that the usual spell of duty was a single journey of from 100 to 150 miles. Vale p53 and Copeland p122 both suggest a return journey of 40 to 60 miles. It is clear that both long single journeys and shorter return journeys were used by the Post Office in scheduling guards' duties as convenience dictated.

"What we consider their health will bear; I consider that a man leaving London at eight, getting to any town by nine the next day, then working again the next night and resting the next, is very fairly and well worked."[1] Not all guards worked such long stages however. Some would work only half this distance or less and then change coaches to return back along the same route, often resting between the two spells of duty. This would happen not only on main routes but would also be the normal pattern on branches and shorter routes where the distance covered might be less. On the London to Edinburgh route in 1829 the first change of guard was not till Grantham (110 miles, 12 hours duty), the next at York (89 miles, 9 hours 45 minutes duty), then Newcastle (76½ miles, 9 hours 40 minutes duty), Belford (48½ miles 5 hours 15 minutes duty) and then to Edinburgh (73 miles, 7 hours 50 minutes duty). This route shows well a pattern of a combination of long and short duties.[2]

The long periods of duty exposed to the elements, during the winter months especially, was the cause of frequent illness, and made it necessary from the commencement to establish a fund from which payments could be made to cover periods of ill-health and recovery from accidents, and eventual retirement when further service was impracticable due to incapacity. In cases of accident and illness clearly brought on by the nature of the employment, the

1. BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 pp 83-84; 1837-38(278) XX pt I 1 p123

2. BRL B383 Acc No 32:1873 pp 85-86; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 12 p110

Post Office were prepared to settle reasonable medical expenses incurred. Deputy postmasters were authorised to pay such accounts locally and then claim from the General Post Office in London. In December 1794 Thomas Hasker suggested a limit of £5 on such payments but higher sums were awarded, and for instance in September 1836 £11-6-6d was authorised for surgeon's bills in respect of William Aldis, guard of the Birmingham to Yarmouth mail who broke his leg when he fell from the coach. Payment of the basic 10-6d a week to the guard might be continued during the period of absence from employment and in May 1840 Robert Bolland, who was suffering from chronic rheumatism and unable to discharge his duties was granted leave of absence on full pay for 12 months to see if he could recover and once more be available for service. In Ireland a similar practice regarding medical treatment was adopted for guards suffering from accident or illness in areas away from Dublin, but those in or near the capital were expected to attend The Dublin Dispensary which since 1789 had been in receipt of a donation from the Irish Post Office.[1] In cases of death arising from employment a grant towards funeral expenses, usually £2-2s, would be made in addition to any medical expenses.[2] For guards unfit for further employment because of incapacity caused directly by their employment, superannuation was possible. No specific age of retirement was recognised and guards were expected to continue in employment until such time as they ceased to be fit enough to do so. The maximum rate of payment was 7/6 a week,

1. POR Post 1/53/219; Post 10/26/82, Post 10/53; Post 15/155/305, Post 15/156/305

2. POR Post 10/26/176; Post 35/11/218

but it was only granted to those with at least 15 years service.[1] Those under this period of employment might be granted a reduced pension, usually 7/-, 6/- or 5/- depending on the length of service, or offered a terminal gratuity varying from £20 to £100. These pension rates were by the mid-nineteenth century regarded as being not very generous, and in 1854 proposals were made to relate pensions more closely to earnings when in service, as it was felt that under the old scheme men were unwilling to retire "when they are becoming unserviceable" because of the severe drop in income. No payment of right was made to widows or the family of men who died in the service of the Post Office, and coachmen were totally excluded from the scheme as they were not Post Office employees.

The plan for providing operating staff in the Mail-coach Department of the Post Office with pensions and sickness benefit funded by contributions from the employees concerned, is one of the earliest contributory pension schemes known. Although non-contributory pensions were awarded to individuals for distinguished political or military service at earlier periods, it was not until 1810 that pensions awarded to officials in government service were sufficiently common to require regulation in accordance with the salary and years of service of the individual concerned, and to require Treasury sanction for their payment.[2] Only in 1834 was an Act passed providing for pensions on a regular basis for all government

1. Irish mail-coach guards superannuated in the period immediately following the union with the British Post Office in 1831, appear to have been placed on a reduced scale: 20 years service or over - 7/- a week, 15-20 years - 6/-, under 15 years - 5/-. POR Post 1/40/189, Post 1/41/315; Post 30/80/1681/1851

2. 50 Geo III c117

officers and clerks on the completion of specified periods of service,[1] and not till 1848 that a superannuation fund was set up for borough police though certain payments for injury and disability had been permissible under the terms of the Municipal Corporations Act (1835).[2] Not until late in the nineteenth century were occupational pensions extended further, railwaymen, teachers and local government officers being some of the earliest groups to have schemes applied to them. Initially Post Office guards made a contribution of 3/-, later reduced to 2/6 a week, which was specifically deducted from the wages of 13/- to fund the scheme and meet the cost of their uniform. Although after the first few years this deduction is no longer mentioned, the establishment of the guards' wages at 10/6 a week might be interpreted as an indication that a hidden deduction was continued.[3] The introduction of a pension scheme for guards is an early manifestation of a trend that is noticeable in the Post Office service by the very end of the eighteenth century, to grant regular pensions to certain retired employees. Usually only specially favoured senior officers in the Post Office were pensioned in the eighteenth century. Other staff worked as long as they were able and thereafter they were expected to fend for themselves. Although the sale of positions was forbidden, private arrangements might be made by some members of staff with their successors for payments or annuities, and such devices were still practised as late as the last decade of the eighteenth century. There was however a growing tide of criticism of such methods and

1. 4 & 5 Wm IV c24

2. 5 & 6 Wm IV c76; 11 & 12 Vict c14

3. POR Post 1/27/84, Post 1/35/365, Post 1/36/259, Post 1/44/350, Post 1/52/209, Post 1/52/385, Post 1/85/230; Post 58/53; BRL B383 Acc No 32:1872 p211; BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p13

a greater inclination in the Post Office to grant regular pensions. The guards' scheme is part of this pattern, remarkable only because of its early date of introduction and the fact that it applied to outdoor operational staff rather than administrative and executive staff to which most early arrangements applied. The introduction of the scheme may well have owed much to Palmer's private initiative.[1]

Those able by a combination of patronage and patience to obtain posts as mail guards tended to make a lifetime career in the service. Guards applying for superannuation frequently recorded thirty or more years of service and some exceeded forty years. In the 1840s, with the falling off in the number of mail guards employed, there was little new recruitment and as a consequence an aging work force. The lack of new recruits is also however an indication that in this period few existing guards thought of seeking alternative employment. In February 1849 96.2% of all the mail guards had in excess of ten years service with the Department and 27.6% had more than twenty years service.

Table 45 - Mail guards - number of years service, February 1849

Number of years service	Guards in England, Scotland and Wales	Guards in Ireland	Total	Percentage of group
over 35	6	2	8	3.3%
31-35	4	2	6	2.6%
26-30	17	2	19	7.9%
21-25	23	10	33	13.8%
16-20	32	12	44	18.4%
11-15	83	37	120	50.2%
6-10	4	5	9	3.8%
0-5	-	-	-	-
	169	70	239	

Source: POR Post 30/80/1681/1851

1. Kenneth Ellis, The Post Office in the Eighteenth Century (1958) p 22

The position of a mail guard combined security of employment and a very attractive scale of remuneration, with the safeguards provided by the sickness and superannuation fund. A degree of discipline was however required by the Post Office to ensure that the mails were adequately protected. They were also concerned that the coach operators were not fraudulently deprived of their legitimate earnings by coach crews. To ensure discipline, dismissals were resorted to from time to time. Such dismissals were frequently publicised in printed notices issued to the guards as a warning against doing their duty in an irregular manner. One of the most frequent causes of dismissal was failure to observe regulations imposed by the Post Office to ensure the security of the mails. Mail boxes were left unlocked or guards deserted their seat at the rear of the coach where the mail box was situated to sit next to the coachman, or permitted a passenger to travel with them at the rear. Guards were also dismissed for failing to carry their weapons, attempting to alter their timepiece or losing mail bags on the road. Drunkeness and abuse to passengers or officials merited dismissal on a number of occasions. A very frequent cause of concern ~~were~~ was attempts to defraud the coaching proprietors of passenger fares or parcel fees. The Post Office were particularly concerned that mail-coaches should not be the agency by which poached game was transported to market. Complaints from country gentlemen regarding this practice were a particular embarrassment to the Post Office. To prevent such practices, coach proprietors and Deputy Superintendents of Mail-coaches were given powers to search mail boxes and ordered to report offending guards. Proprietors finding parcels being conveyed by guards could "take them to their own use, or send them to a Poor House, Hospital

or some other charitable Purpose". Dismissals of mail guards for such offences in some years were frequent. During the year 1813 for instance no fewer than 20 guards were dismissed for various reasons. Less severe penalties were also from time to time imposed such as fines or suspensions, and a book maintained in which minor offences were recorded.[1]

Mail-coach drivers were not Post Office employees and were hired and paid by the coach proprietors. The Post Office did however exercise some degree of control over them. Mail-coach guards were required to report coachmen for misconduct and a number of instances are known where this occurred. Mills, coachman of the London to Edinburgh mail was reported by his guard in June 1836 for allowing a passenger to drive the coach, while in June of the next year the coachman of the Belfast to Enniskillen mail was reported by the guard for being drunk. Often however guards must for the sake of good relationships, have turned a blind eye on irregular practices, and in some cases actually participated in them. Mail-coach guards for instance were accused in August 1837 of encouraging coachmen to drive recklessly and race one another between London and Hounslow. The law could also be invoked to control coachmen, for under an Act of 1765[2] drivers who through intoxication, negligence or misconduct endangered the safety of

1. POR Post 10/5/20, Post 10/5/29, Post 10/5/39, Post 10/5/49, Post 10/5/64, Post 10/6/123, Post 10/6/133, Post 10/24/103, Post 10/24/153, Post 10/27/312; Post 35/10/3, Post 35/10/7, Post 35/10/11, Post 35/10/25, Post 35/10/65, Post 35/10/74, Post 35/10/94, Post 35/10/109, Post 35/10/143, Post 35/10/166, Post 35/10/145, Post 35/11/167, Post 35/11/173, Post 35/11/178, Post 35/11/180, Post 35/11/190

2. 5 Geo III c48

passengers could be prosecuted and fined a sum of not less than £5 and not more than £10. The Post Office not only insisted on a number of occasions that coachmen should be prosecuted, but might also direct the contractors in accordance with the terms of their contract to dismiss the offending coachmen. Coaching contractors would normally be quite prepared to dismiss and prosecute drivers if they had offended, for their interests were also threatened by drunkeness, negligence and misconduct. If however they declined to take firm action the Post Office could always as a last resort withdraw the contract. Notice was given in December 1808 to Alexander Wilson to quit the London and Carlisle and Carlisle and Glasgow mail-coaches as he persisted in employing drunken drivers.[1]

Coachmen were paid on a similar basis to guards. Their wages were kept low and they were expected to make up their earnings from tips received. Nimrod, the well-known mid-nineteenth century commentator on coaching matters, declared that the drivers of highest attainment could expect wages of as much as 18/- to £1 a week, but that a more common payment was 12/- to 14/- a week from which some employers deducted 1/6 a week to cover the government duty charged on coachmen. The latter range appears to have been the more common of the two. Wages of 10/6 were paid to the coachman of the London to Oxford post coach in 1815, and the Birmingham to Sheffield mail-coach in 1803-04, and 12/- a week to those of the London to Poole mail-coach in 1790-91, while Charles Johnson declared in March 1832 that the usual payment to mail-coach drivers was

1. POR Post 10/1/22a, Post 10/35, Post 10/65, Post 10/157; Post 35/6/250; BPP 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 81 p42

10/-, 12/- or sometimes more. Drivers of pair horse mail-coaches as they carried no guard and the coachman was required to take charge of the mail, received as a bonus a mail guard's uniform issued by the Post Office. Tips from passengers would amount to rather more than the wages but would vary from route to route and stage to stage. Nimrod declared that on "swell coaches that load well" the driver might earn from £200 to £400 a year but the average earnings of coachmen in general, who mainly worked on less lucrative and prestigious routes must have been well below this range. From their earnings coachmen were expected to tip the horse-keepers at the various inns along the road whose prompt attention was necessary if time schedules were to be maintained. Stage-coach drivers did not benefit from the Post Office sickness, burial and superannuation fund but a benevolent club was established for coach drivers and guards generally, which for the payment of a guinea a quarter provided sickness and accident benefit of £2-2s a week for any period not exceeding a year and a guinea a week for life if disabled. Bianconi operated a pension scheme for his own drivers, but such employer schemes were probably uncommon.[1]

1. POR Post 59/42/137; BC 546.43/M3840, 546.43/M3907; HRO Winchester Records - City leases A/46/18; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p69; Nimrod, "Essays on the Road" in Capt Malet, Annals of the Road (1876) pp 358-59; Philip Newman, "The Old Bell Inn, Holborn", Middlesex and Hertfordshire Notes & Queries Vol IV(1898) p104; M. O'C Bianconi and S.T. Watson, Bianconi - King of the Irish Roads (Dublin 1962) p121

Chapter 7 - Mail-coaches and their Provision

Although some coach proprietors owned the vehicles that they operated, it had become a common practice by the end of the eighteenth century to hire vehicles from coachbuilders, the proprietor and his partners in the coach company merely supplying the horses and the crew. When mail-coaches were first introduced on the Bath and Bristol road on 2 August 1784, and subsequently extended during 1785 to twenty further routes, the operating contractors were required to provide their own coaches which were usually hired by them from coachbuilders with whom they already had business contacts. Palmer was however to discover that this system failed to provide the regularity of operation that he required for mail transit. Coaches were contracted for at the lowest possible prices and were often of a poor standard of construction and inadequately maintained and cleaned. By December 1787 he was complaining that the most frequent cause of delay was the "shameful condition and dangerous construction of the Carriages" resulting in breakdowns on the road so "that scarce a day passes without one, two or three of them arriving some hours after the appointed time."[1] Palmer saw the solution of the problem in the universal adoption of a standard type of mail-coach of approved construction. To this end he had been experimenting since the Spring of 1787 with the use of coaches designed by John Besant, who had in the previous year taken out a patent (No 1574) for

> "Certain Improvements on Wheel Carriages by means of which they are Less Liable to Overturn, will Follow with Less Draft, go Down Hill without Distressing the Horses, and have Less Friction on the Axtletrees than any now in Use."

1. POR Post 10/2; Herbert Joyce, The History of the Post Office from its Establishment down to 1836(1893) pp 282-83

Palmer must have been satisfied with the performance of Besant's coaches for by December 1787 he had decided to extend their use as quickly as the new vehicles could be constructed. Mail-coach contractors were either persuaded or ordered to hire coaches of the new pattern from Besant. It took some considerable time however for the new coaches to be provided for all routes and that through South Wales from Bristol for instance was not using patent mail-coaches until the Spring of 1789. An attempt in April 1791 to force the contractors of the Bristol to Oxford mail to use the new coaches resulted in a refusal and the temporary withdrawl of the coaches altogether from this route. Palmer also found that the introduction of the new coaches was insufficient in itself to operate an improved service. At first the maintenance on the patent coaches, carried out at the coaching inns from which the vehicles departed, was slipshod. The greasing for instance was so badly done "that seldom a day passed a Coach did not fire." To correct this Palmer arranged that all maintenance should in future be undertaken on a regular basis by Besant at his manufactory at Millbank, to which the coaches were to be taken after they had completed their journey to London.[1]

The patent mail-coaches offered a number of advantages both to the Post Office and operating contractors, apart from the benefits bestowed by the standardisation of vehicles and maintenance procedures. The coaches were generally lighter than those previously used, considered more stable, and although not revolutionary in design, adopted a number of improved features such as the mail axle which greatly reduced the chances of a wheel coming off in service. To

1. POR Post 10/3, Post 10/24/156; Post 96/21/28, Post 96/21/57

ensure the utmost speed for the mails John Palmer had from the commencement of service in 1784 tried to restrict the conveyance of outside passengers and the quantity of luggage and parcels that could be carried. The patent mail-coach reflected the continuance of this policy. Only four inside and one outside passengers were provided for, while space for luggage was confined to a boot at the rear and space under the seats inside. The coaches were drawn by four horses, though six might be used in certain circumstances under difficult winter conditions.[1] The contractors responsible for operating the patent mail-coaches pretended however to be less happy than the Post Office about them, stating that they were "not at all calculated for the purpose." In a memorial presented in April 1792 by seven of the main London operating contractors they criticised both the price charged for the hire of the coach and their construction which they claimed "destroys and kills their horses." What is clear is that the interests of the Post Office and the operating contractors did not coincide. The former wanted a fast service with a high degree of reliability, the latter were more concerned with operating costs and profitability. A lower speed would mean fewer changes of horses and extend their working life, while increased passenger and parcels carrying capacity would maximise profits. It was for these reasons rather than any obvious defect in the patent coaches that they petitioned the Post Office for a return to a system where they provided their own coaches.[2]

1. From the 1820s a number of two horse coaches were used by the Post Office on short distance routes where speed was not critical. See p187.

2. POR Post 10/2; Post 96/21/1, Post 96/21/36; Charles Harper, Stage Coach and Mail in Days of Yore(1903) Vol I pp 179-80; Philip Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) pp 47-48

The standard of comfort provided for passengers in Besant's coaches was probably no higher than that of contemporary stage-coaches. The patent mail-coaches had a body set high above the ground and hung from the coach chasis by means of leather straps. This system, also used on many stage-coaches, was designed to eliminate as far as possible the direct shock from uneven road surfaces as the coach had no form of springing. To an extent this may have proved effective, but poor road conditions would send the coach body oscillating from side to side as Mathew Boulton, in common with many other inside passengers, found out when he travelled from London to Axminster in 1798. The outside passenger had an equally uncomfortable journey, for the coachman's box on which he rode, detached from the main body, was devoid of any form of springing or shock-absorbing suspension. It was hoped that this lack of comfort would keep the driver awake and alert.

The first and only major change in the design of mail-coaches came in 1804. This involved combining the coachman's box, the main body and the rear boot in one unit which was to lie on horizontal springs. These changes enabled the height of the vehicle to be reduced so improving stability. A coach of the new design was tried on the London to Leeds service in December 1803 and by 21 January 1804 Thomas Hasker, the Mail-coach Superintendent, was firmly convinced of the advantages that it offered and advocated general adoption. Existing coaches were to be altered at a cost of £33 a vehicle and as compensation to the coachbuilders the contract rate of hire paid by the operating contractors was raised by a ½d a mile. To recoup this extra charge the operators were permitted to increase the number of outside passengers. On the more lucrative main routes a total of two outside passengers were allowed, but on services where

the loading was less certain or regular four outsides were permitted. In 1814 of the 52 routes operated by patent mail-coaches, 28 were allowed four outside passengers. These were mainly provincial cross and branch routes. The new mail-coaches served the needs of the service well and in July 1807 Thomas Hasker could report that "their lightness, their convenience, was never in better estimation than at present".[1] Before the early 1820s stage-coach design tended to lag behind that of mail-coaches, but improvements in road engineering and surfacing in the early nineteenth century enabled lighter faster stage-coaches to be built provided with improved springing and bringing new standards of comfort to passengers. It is a testimony to the soundness of the mail-coach design adopted in 1804 that despite considerable stage-coach development it never needed other than limited modification to remain competitive. In 1835 when the contract for building the mail-coaches was for the first time publicly advertised for tender, premiums amounting to one hundred guineas were offered for original ideas for the improvement of the design. Several were submitted but none deemed of sufficient merit to incorporate. The new coachbuilders were therefore merely instructed to build the mail-coaches on the same basic plan "with such alterations and improvements as may be practicable without interfering with the due regard to expedition as well as strength and safety." Some modifications were made such as the substitution of the telegraph for the mail spring at the rear, the shortening of the perch and the lowering of the body. By 1835 the Post Office were allowing three outside passengers to be

1. POR Post 10/10; Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 35/4/425, Post 35/5/60

carried on all patent mail-coaches, though four was common on provincial routes. The volume of mail, and especially newspapers, made the provision of larger mail boxes necessary by October 1833 while enlarged boots were provided on some routes for the same reason by the early 1840s. The standardised construction of patent mail-coaches was matched by the adoption of a common style of finish consisting of red wheels and undercarriage, maroon lower body pannels and black upper ones. Each door bore the royal cypher, the upper pannels of the body the stars of the four British orders of chivalry, and the number and the words "Royal Mail" were placed on the rear boot. The towns which formed the terminal points of the route were shown in small letters at the top of the door pannels.[1]

With the introduction of Besant's patent coaches in the late 1780s the Post Office established new standards in vehicle construction and operational maintenance. The new coaches were lighter than stage-coaches, about 19 cwt unladen compared with about 24 cwt, and with their limited loading and strict timekeeping were able to operate at speeds in excess of 7 m.p.h. and establish themselves as the premier form of public land passenger conveyance. Some attempts were made to match the speed of the mail-coaches by introducing light fast coaches, but most stage-coach proprietors were content to continue to operate vehicles carrying four or six inside and up to ten outside passengers, three times the amount of luggage, with less frequent changes of horses and at much lower

1. POR Post 1/42/78, Post 1/42/132; Post 10/34/45, Post 10/148; Post 35/19/274; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 pp 42-44; Edward Corbett, An Old Coachman's Chatter (1890) p28; H. McCausland, The English Carriage (1948) p112

speeds. The mail-coach enjoyed a period of forty years during which it was able to cream off the most valuable part of the coaching trade.[1] By 1825 however increased competition from stage-coaches was beginning to make itself felt. Stage-coach development both in terms of improved construction, comfort and finish advanced rapidly to take advantage of the equally rapid advance in road engineering and construction. Competition between rival atage-coach proprietors was at times fierce and showed itself not only in short-lived fare wars but more significantly in improvements to vehicles and the services offered to the passengers. Mail-coach proprietors had little influence on the design of their vehicles which were built to a standard specification laid down by the Post Office, and by a builder isolated from the effects of competition by a long term contract. Thus the spur to improvement that would be expected in a situation where government and private enterprise were in competition, did not operate. Such was the significance of the improvements to stage-coaches however that comparisons unfavourable to the mails began to be made, and as early as November 1825 William Lane, a mail-coach contractor, could claim that "stage coaches are fitted up inside like a gentleman's carriage, but the mail is as plain as can be". This point was to be repeated frequently by witnesses offering evidence to Parliamentary committees in the second half of the next decade. By 1835 Benjamin Worthy Horne, who operated both mail and stage-coaches, calculated that the former could be built about 20% cheaper than the latter because "the workmanship of the mail is exceedingly rough generally speaking." John

1. POR Post 10/2; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 31,33; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 18 p72

Waude, a London coachbuilder, added that mahogany panaels were frequently used in stage-coaches whereas pine was used for the mails, while better cloth and lace and higher standards of finish added to the cost of stage-coaches. It ought to be pointed out that some of the difference in the cost of building could be accounted for by the fact that mail-coaches were built to a uniform pattern and finish, and parts were interchangeable, thus lowering the inventory of stock and spares that needed to be carried and possibly enabling workmen of lower standards of skill to be substituted in some cases. William Chaplin, a mail and stage coach proprietor, admitted that builders of stage-coaches were "obliged to study the caprice and whim of all kinds of proprietors" a reflection of the fierce competition between operators to attract passengers by providing vehicles of a more sumptuous appearance and finish than their rivals. By the mid 1830s not only were mail-coaches overtaken in style but also in mechanical innovation. Sir Henry Parnell could declare in June 1836 that the Post Office have "been always behind the proprietors of stage coaches in introducing improvements as to speed and as to the construction of coaches" and had to be jogged either by their competitors or the public into effecting improvements. Three years earlier John Macneil, an engineer employed by the Office of Woods and Forests on the Holyhead Road, had noted that stage-coaches"were hung lighter than the mails, using a different type of spring which now the road surfaces had so much improved proved much superior in function." Clearly by the mid 1830s the mail-coach was being rivalled in public esteem. Despite the fact that stage-coaches carried considerably more outside passengers than the mails they managed in some cases to equal or nearly equal their speed. The cream now had to be shared.[1]

From the appearance of the first of the Besant patent coaches in 1787 until 5 January 1836 the mail-coaches were supplied by the firm that he initiated. Several early

1. POR Post 10/1/25a; BPP 1835(313) XXVIII 339 Appendix 1 p10, Appendix 14 p59, Appendix 18 p71, Appendix 19 p75; 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 3 p4; 1837(70) XXXIV Pt 1 263 Appendix 35 p71, Appendix 54 pp 96-97

documents concerned with the supply of mail-coaches describe Besant as an engineer of Henley-on-Thames, and he probably did not move to London until 1786, the year in which he took out his first patent. His London address at this date was in Long Acre, the centre of the coachbuilding trade, but he does not appear in any contemporary London trade directories and may not have conducted the trade of coachbuilder at this date. It is significant that he employed Charles Biggar of St Martin's Lane to build "a new Coach with a Perch Carriage" which he hired to John Palmer for a four year term from 1 April 1787. This prototype coach impressed the Post Office and the use of patent coaches extended. On 9 August 1788 the Post Office agreed to contract to use Besant's coaches exclusively for a 14 year period.[1] To provide manufacturing facilities to meet this growing demand Besant was obliged to seek partners with capital and experience. The first partnership was formed on 15 October 1787 and named Besant & Co. Early partners were a Mr Wilberforce, John Brooks, Charles Bonnor and John Vidler. Brooks was bought out by Vidler in August 1788, and of Mr Wilberforce who became a partner on 30 October of the same year nothing further is known. Charles Bonnor was deputy to John Palmer and had before his stage career experience in the coachbuilding trade. His position as a partner was kept secret from Palmer, and he may have been included for his ability, because of his official position, to promote the extension of the use of the patent coaches. John Vidler was a builder whose address was 21 Millbank Street, Westminster.[2] Besant & Co established their coach building works at 13 Millbank Row near Vidler's former address. Besant died on 2 December 1791 and Bonnor's connection with the coachbuilders was discovered by Palmer who

1. POR Post 10/2; McCausland op cit p110

2. POR Post 1/16/254; Post 10/1/18, Post 10/2; Post 96/21/70, Post 96/22/59, Post 96/22/60; WCL E518/1787, E529/1789, E532/1790, E535/1791 Poor rate collector's books, Parish of St Margaret and St John the Evangelist; F588/1786, F590/1787, F592/1788, F594/1789, F596/1790 St. Martin's-in-the-Fields; London Directory 1791,1793; Edmund Vale, The Mail Coach Men of the Late Eighteenth Century(1960) pp 29-30; Charles R Clear, John Palmer(of Bath) Mail Coach Pioneer(1955) p39

revealed it to Lord Chesterfield, one of the Postmasters-General. Bonnor was offered the choice of giving up his official position or his partnership. Vidler however had no wish to share the business with Bonnor and bought out his interest in January 1792 with a loan from Thomas Wilson of the Swan with Two Necks inn who was one of the leading mail-coach operators. The business continued in John Vidler's control until his death in February 1810 after which his two sons John and Finch took over. John died in 1826 leaving his interest in the firm to his daughter Elizabeth who married Edward Parratt. Thereafter the coachworks traded as Parratt and Vidler. Edward Parratt appears to have been the active partner, Vidler agreeing to take an annuity from the business as his share. Finch Vidler once more became active in the management of the business in 1833. After losing the mail-coach building contract in January 1836 Finch Vidler appears to have retired from this line of trade. As the new contractors were required by the terms of the agreements with the Post Office to supply entirely new vehicles, Vidler must have had the stock of mail-coaches left on his hands. There is no evidence to show how he disposed of them. Almost immediately after the cessation of the Post Office contract he appears to have offered to rent his premises in parts "on building leases" which were taken up by a number of tradesmen. For two years after the end of the contract to build coaches, he continued to pay rates on the premises but thereafter these were paid by the Steam Carriage Company.[1]

There is no doubt that the Royal Mail Coach Manufactory established by Besant and carried on by the Vidler family was a very substantial business by the standards of the day. It was responsible for the building of all patent mail-coaches

1. POR Post 10/1/22b; Transport 18; WCL E689/1836, E694/1837, E699/1838 Poor rate collector's books, parish of St Margaret and St John the Evangelist; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p16; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 5 p34, Appendix 17 p67; London Post Office Directory 1830-33; Robson's London Directory (18th edn 1838); Harper op cit Vol I p178; Vale op cit p284

and by the 1830s was producing 36 new vehicles a year. At that period about 300 such coaches were in operation all owned by Vidler's company and leased to the operating contractors. This fleet of coaches in itself represented an investment of around £15,000 to £20,000. The coachworks was also responsible for all rebuilding and repairs and for cleaning, inspecting and greasing each vehicle daily. A valuation made in March 1791 revealed that at this early stage in the firm's existence total stock, including mail-coaches available for hire, was valued at £19,860-12-10d. The capital needed to establish and operate such a company was very substantial. By March 1791 borrowings amounted to £11,000 of which £8,073-11-9d had been raised by discounting through their bankers bills of exchange drawn on the operating contractors for the hire of coaches. These were at this period issued to Besant & Co in advance but not payable until the date due. Debts to tradesmen in March 1791 came to just over £2,000 while amounts owed to Besant & Co were £1,436-19s. The need for John Vidler to buy out Charles Bonnor, and take over John Besant's share on his death, must have placed a considerable strain on his resources. In July 1792 he calculated that the capital employed in the business was now nearly £30,000. Of this £12,000 had to be advanced by Thomas Wilson, while £9,750 had been loaned by the London bankers Esdaile, Hammett and Esdaile. In 1795 the total capital was still estimated as £30,000 but the advance by the firm's banking house had risen to £14,000[1]. Apart from the London works at Millbank, provincial depots had to be established. There were 17 of these in 1835 where spare coaches and staff to undertake repair work were maintained. The main provincial depots were at York, Edinburgh, Manchester and Birmingham. The coaches on most routes from London would work the full length of the road and would return to the Millbank works for maintenance, but on the Great North Road coaches were changed at York. Coaches on cross and branch routes would need to be maintained at these

1. POR Post 1/17/31-35; Post 10/2; Post 96/21/49; F.G. Hamilton Price, A Handbook of London Bankers(1876) p53

provincial depots. The Edinburgh depot was responsible for cleaning, greasing and maintaining nine coaches daily and about a sixth of Vidler's coaches were kept at these sub-factories. In 1835 Vidler was employing 140 men, a substantially larger labour force than any other London coachbuilder. The daily routine maintenance and the replacement of components that had failed in service or were time-expired would have occupied the majority of these workmen, the building of new coaches a lesser number. A coach body, if not damaged by accidents in service, might last as long as 14 to 15 years, but would need varnishing every year. Wheels and springs frequently failed, and a fresh set of wheels were fitted every two or three months as routine. The standardisation of components used in mail-coaches, all vehicles being of virtually identical construction and appearance, must have been a great advantage in ensuring rapid repairs and economy in stock inventory and skilled staff.[1] Stage-coaches were built to individual requirements of coach proprietors and even as late as 1835 John Waude, a leading London coachbuilder, admitted that the only components he used in which any standardisation existed were axles and wheels.

The extent of the value and influence of the Post Office contract for mail-coaches can in part be judged from the number of vehicles involved. Attempts to establish the number of mail-coaches in use at various dates are complicated by the fact that some of the vehicles were not patent coaches, but stage-coaches carrying mails, the vehicles being provided by the contractor. Few main routes either from London, or cross or branch, were of this type however. The figures listed in table 46 (page 231) are believed to be for patent coaches only, with the exception of the figures for 1812 and 1840 which are for all coaches conveying mails. The figures for 1840 are instructive in that they are broken down into patent and non-patent vehicles. The number of contracts involving the use of patent coaches is listed as 62 which it was estimated

1. BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 p326; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 5 p35, Appendix 12 p53, Appendix 17 p67, Appendix 18 pp 71-72; Vale op cit pp 209-10

Table 46 - Number of mail-coaches operated 1792-1843

Date	England & Wales	Scotland	Ireland	Sources
1792	nearly 150	-	-	POR Post 10/2
1804	137	-	-	POR Post 10/10
1812	220	-	-	POR Post 1/24/190
1825	251	29	average about 74	POR Post 1/42/54; BPP 1835(401) XLVIII 497
1830	251	31		
1834	261	29		
1835		280-290	-	BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 17 p67
c1840		about 250-350	-	POR Post 59/42/138
1843	-	-	60	POR Post 1/64/24

would involve the use of 200 to 300 coaches. Although the second class contracts involving the use of the contractors' own vehicles were nearly as numerous, amounting to 54, they only involved 63 vehicles, being mostly short distance routes. The figures given in table 46 throw grave doubt on the total for the number of mail-coaches quoted by some writers. A figure of 700 mail-coaches for 1835 was given by Thrupp in his History of Coaches published in 1877,[1] and this figure has unfortunately been repeated in more recent works.[2] Estimates for public stage coaches quoted in books on road transport do however appear to be more nearly in accord with the figures quoted in British parliamentary papers.[3] The number of

1. G.A. Thrupp, The History of Coaches(1877) p11

2. For example Anthony Bird, Roads and Vehicles(1969) p126 and repeated from this source by Philip Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p43

3. Bird (p126) and Bagwell (p43) give a figure of 3,300 stage-coaches running regularly in 1835. Edwin A Pratt, A History of Inland Transport & Communication(1912) p325 suggests over 3,000 on the road by 1836. Only Christopher I Savage, An Economic History of Transport (Rev edn 1966) p 31 uses grossly distorted figures when he attributes a fleet of 3,000 coaches in 1836 to the London coach operator, William Chaplin alone.

stage-coaches licensed in 1812 was 1,355 compared with a total of 220 vehicles conveying mail. For the period 1825-28 the average number of licensed stage-coaches was 2,942 compared with an average of 280 mail-coaches. Thus at this period mail-coaches represented around 9.5% of all public coaches.[1] The gross figures for public coaches pale into insignificance however if compared with the number of private carriages using British roads in this period.[2]

When the Post Office first interested itself in Besant's coach the probable intention was for the vehicles to be bought outright. This idea was however dropped at an early stage and one in which the operating contractors hired the coaches substituted. The terms of the first agreement between the Post Office and Besant were drawn up in 1787 but never signed. Coaches were hired out to contractors on the basis of 1½d per single mile, Besant to be responsible for repairs and maintenance. Besant sent his staff to the inns used by the contractors after the coaches had come in, to inspect and grease them, but Palmer found this unsatisfactory as there was a reluctance to take coaches out of service and return them to the coachworks, while greasing was done in a slip shod manner. Palmer therefore insisted that after each journey the coaches should be withdrawn from service and returned to the Millbank coachworks for proper inspection and maintenance. They were not to be sent out again on the same day that they arrived. This Besant agreed to, but pointed out that this scheme would require nearly double the number of coaches and extra horses and men to draw the coaches from the inns to his works. It was agreed that 2/= a day each would be a reasonable charge for drawing, cleaning and greasing the coaches at Millbank and that the operating contractors should pay this. The coaching contractors however saw no reason why they should be responsible for this new

1. BPP 1830(686) XXV 226; 1835(401) XLVIII 497

2. James W Burgess, A Practical Treatise on Coach-Building(1881), p 155 states that the total of "Carriages of all sorts" was 60,000 in 1814 rising to 432,600 in 1874.

imposition. They not only declined to pay but counter-attacked by demanding from the Post Office a rise in their own payment for conveying the mails. By 5 January 1792 arrears for drawing, cleaning and greasing amounted to £1,676 with little prospect of being able to induce the operating contractors to pay. Eventually the Post Office agreed to take on this burden and by the 1830s was paying £2,200 p.a. for maintenance.[1] John Vidler when he took over the business on Besant's death in December 1791 realised that no signed agreement existed with the Post Office. As a result of a petition, a 14 year contract was entered into from 10 May 1793. The rate paid for hire was raised to 1¾d a single mile in 1804 on the introduction of the new pattern of mail-coach, and the contract was renewed for a further 14 years from 5 January 1808 and once again from 5 January 1822. In 1835 the operating contractors were paying 1½d a single mile, but routes north of Edinburgh bore a small surcharge at 3¼d a double mile. At no time was the contract offered for public competition, the Post Office being content with the service provided by the contractor and prepared to negotiate price by reference to the figures at which stage-coaches were supplied by other builders.[2]

That the contract of the Millbank Royal Mail Coach Manufactory with the Post Office was generally profitable would seem certain or it would not have endured for 48 years. The early years however saw difficulties in raising capital and overcoming short falls in anticipated income. John Besant estimated his profits from the commencement of coach contracting up to 31 March 1791, over three years, as only £513-11-7d, while John Palmer was of the opinion that at the time of Besant's death in December 1791 the partnership was "a losing concern." Besant certainly had considerable trade debts at the time of

1. POR Post 1/16/253-7; Post 10/2, Post 10/3

2. POR Post 10/4, Post 10/10; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 Appendix 3 p52; 1835(313) XLVIII 339

his death which his widow was unable to cover. Her only asset appears to have been her husband's patent and the rights to this she sold to John Vidler in return for an annuity of 12/- a week. John Vidler's need to raise capital following Besant's death and Charles Bonnor's withdrawl from the partnership came at a time when operating contractors were refusing to pay the cost of drawing the coaches to the manufactory for cleaning and greasing, and also challenging demands made on them for damage to vehicles due to alleged negligence. On 26 July 1792 Vidler petitioned the Post Office for redress. Arrears due for drawing, cleaning and greasing amounted to £1,676-14-1d for the years 1790-91 and by the next year amounted to £2,400. Palmer was sympathetic. He appears to have genuinely believed that if payment was not forthcoming the business might fail with a deficiency of between £7,000 and £10,000 leaving the Post Office in a position where it would have difficulty in maintaining its services. It was for this reason that he agreed to the Post Office taking on the financial burden of the daily routine maintenance and placed pressure on the operating contractors to settle the arrears up to the time the Post Office took over the liability.[1] Profits remained low in 1793 and 1794 with Vidler claiming a return of only five or six per cent. Better financial results seemed to be promised for the future but war conditions resulted in increased labour and material costs. In 1803 Vidler was claiming that materials and wages were nearly double those of 1787. He was having to pay double piece work rates to skilled craftsmen, and half as much again for labourers. A coach which in 1793 cost £70 to build was now costing £120 to £150. The justice of his claim was accepted by the Post Office who in connection with the introduction of the new type of mail-coach in 1803 granted increased rates of hire.[2] The hiring

1. POR Post 1/17/34-35; Post 10/2, Post 10/3, Post 10/26/89; Post 96/21/49, Post 96/22/58, Post 96/22/60

2. POR Post 10/10. The cost of building a mail-coach at this period compares very closely with the sum of £132-15s paid in December 1804 for a new stage-coach to operate between London and Bedford (BRO DDX 37/4)

price paid to Vidler by the contractors did not however fall back appreciably after the war, despite the fact that labour and material costs fell, while improved standards of road engineering and maintenance were also reducing repair costs. It is probable that in this period profits were at their highest. Income from contract hire in the period 1825-34 never fell below £27,986 (1832) and reached its highest point at £31,430 in 1828. To this income must be added around £2,300 per annum paid by the Post Office for daily routine maintenance for the coaches and a small addition obtained from the contractors in respect of damage caused by negligence. From this was met the cost of building 36 new coaches a year at about £130 each (£4,680) and providing maintenance on a fleet of just under 300 coaches of which 200 were regularly operated and the remainder spare. A labour force of about 140 workmen had to be paid. Some skilled craftsmen in the coachbuilding trade engaged on piece work were earning in the mid 1830s as much as £5 to £6 a week. These rates were exceptional but skilled labour paid by the week might earn 36/- a week building stage-coaches. As the variety of design and finish were not required by Vidler for the construction of mail-coaches he could employ less skilled and versatile staff paid around 28/- a week.[1] He was also reported to employ many apprentices in his works. His labour bill was thus probably in the region of about £7,500 p.a. Repair materials must be added to his costs, and here it is difficult to predict what a true figure might be. In 1827 it was stated by a witness giving evidence before a parliamentary committee that a set of tires cost £3 to £5 and a set of wheels £12, and the main maintenance costs would centre around these and the replacement of springs.[2]

1. W.B. Adam, English Pleasure Carriages (1837) pp 188-89 illustrates the hierarchical nature of the various grades of craftsmen and labourers in the coach and carriage building trades.

2. In the year 11 September 1790 to 10 September 1791, 786 broken springs were replaced, and in addition 165 springs "set", 31 broken axletrees replaced and 74 "set" and 5125 wheels replaced. This was on a fleet of less than 150 vehicles, whereas over double this number were operating in the 1830s. As roads improved however, the amount of maintenance required declined considerably and by the 1820s was one of the factors contributing to a substantial fall in stage-coach hire rates (POR Post 96/21/43).

Other expenses would relate to the cost of the London manufactory buildings and provincial workshops. Walter Williamson, a Bristol stage-coach builder, claimed in 1827 that repairs cost him more than half his revenue. Assuming that Vidler had similar costs, this would suggest an expenditure of around £18,000 per annum for the repair of the 300 mail-coaches. If we add to this the cost of building 36 new coaches (£4,680) and interest of 5% on a capital of around £25,000 (£1,250), this would point to a nett profit in the late 1820s and early 1830s in the range £6,000 to £10,000, or a return on capital of between 24% and 40%. Thus an attractive profit remained after deducting all expenses. How else can we explain the competition to obtain the contract when it was advertised for public tender in 1835, and the substantially lower contract price obtained as a result?[1]

The question must be asked whether the Post Office, because of its policy of failing to encourage competitive tendering for mail-coaches, was responsible for obliging the horsing contractors to pay excessive charges. Evidence suggests that this was certainly not so up to the 1820s. John Palmer in 1793 regarded the rates charged as reasonable and claimed that the price was only kept down to those levels "from the whole being contracted for at one Manufactory." Two of the main operating contractors in submitting evidence before a Parliamentary committee in May 1811 expressed the view that coaches could not be supplied at a cheaper rate even if the contract was thrown open to competitive tender. Rates of hire for mail-coaches at this period were lower than those for stage-coaches. William Horne, one of the major London coach operators, in December 1827 declared the rates of hire for mail-coaches had been very favourable twenty years earlier when 3½d to 4d a double mile was a common rate for stage-coaches.

1. POR Post 1/42/353; BPP 1835(59) XXXVII 1; 1835(313) XLVIII 339 Appendix 2 p12, Appendix 15 p64, Appendix 17 p67, Appendix 18 p71; 1835(401) XLVIII 497

By the late 1820s however rates for stage-coaches had fallen to 2½d to 3d a double mile, whereas mail-coaches were generally paid for at 3d in England and Wales and 3½d in Scotland, despite the fact that they cost nearly a third less to build. William Chaplin, another major coach proprietor, agreed that "circumstances had of late turned in favour" of the contract signed in 1822 by Vidler for a 14 year period. Prices of coach hire had fallen considerably for "since the superior management of the roads ... now they have got into the principle of almost pulverising the stones, there is no jar nor a third of the wear and tear."[1] Horne offered to contract to supply mail-coaches at 2d a double mile.[2] The excess profits believed to have been made by Vidler led to a Parliamentary committee being set up in 1835 to examine the method by which contracts for the hire of coaches were made by the Post Office. It was highly critical of the methods used, and advocated that the contracts should be advertised for public tender. This procedure was adopted by the Post Office and despite the fact that the coaches had to be available to operate from 5 January 1836, very short notice indeed, 52 interested parties applied for details of the terms of the contract and leading coachbuilders were found without difficulty to undertake the hire at substantially reduced charges. In the last quarter of the Vidler contract £8,170-3-1½d had been paid by the contractors and the Post Office for hire and maintenance of mail-coaches. The charge for the first quarter of the new contract was only £5,239-17-8d, a saving of 35.9%.[3]

1. The reduced cost of stage-coach hire brought about by improved roads was however offset by the increased cost of horse provision now that speeds were higher and the length of stages reduced. See p272n

2. POR Post 96/22/61; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 34,42; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 6 pp 37,39, Appendix 7 pp 41,43, Appendix 9 p46; 1835(542) XLVIII 487

3. POR Post 1/42/353; Post 10/34/25; BPP 1838(265) XIV 509

Early in 1835 the inclination of the Post Office was to continue the contract with Vidler if suitable terms could be agreed. Officials were clearly pleased with the service provided by the Millbank coachworks and commented favourably on the quality of the materials used in the construction of mail-coaches. They were further afraid of damage that might be done to the service should the contract for supplying coaches be awarded on the basis of competitive price tendering to builders lacking either the capital or experience to undertake it. They had also managed to obtain a reduction of £1,800 in the contract price. Vidler's contract was due to expire on 5 January 1836 and as early as 14 February 1835 he was pressing for a decision regarding renewal as he would require to buy materials if he was to build coaches for the next year. He must have been alarmed when in May 1835 Parliament appointed a committee to look into the question of mail-coach contracts, and from that date appears to have taken a less than co-operative attitude. He regarded the committee as hostile to the renewal of his contract and instead of trying to meet their objections, went as far as to indicate to the Post Office that he would require the restitution of the £1,800 cut if he was to renew. As time was short, if the contract was to be publicly advertised and improvements to construction carefully considered, the Post Office tried to persuade Vidler to extend his contract for a further six months. Vidler was reluctant to agree to such an extension claiming that 12 months was the minimum that he could agree to but eventually in June 1835 consented to continue until July 1836. An agreement to this effect was drawn up, but Vidler then declined to sign it. This change of heart meant further lost time and now there was a bare six months until the contract expired. The Parliamentary committee were so incensed with Vidler's vacillation that they specified that tenders were not to be accepted from him. Advertisements asking for quotations for the contract were inserted in the newspapers on 3 July 1835.[1]

1. POR Post 1/42/78; Post 10/34/1, Post 10/34/2, Post 10/34/4, Post 10/34/8, Post 10/34/10, Post 10/34/11, Post 10/34/13, Post 10/34/15; BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 pp 8-9

The Millbank coach manufactory, based upon its monopoly position as the supplier of mail-coaches, had within a few years of its inception developed as a major employer of capital and labour in London. With the termination of its contract how many firms were capable of undertaking work on this scale? Certainly there was no shortage of coachbuilders, both in London and the provinces. In 1835 for instance London directories were listing well in excess of 250 coachbuilders in the capital.[1] Most of these however must have been very small enterprises concerned with a limited programme of building and maintaining private carriages and trade vans and carts. A large capital was required to build stage-coaches which were more usually hired to operators than sold outright. Thus the building of stage-coaches in the capital was confined to a mere handful of very substantial firms, with a few provincial builders in the more important coaching centres. Butler William Mountain, an important stage-coach proprietor, stated in 1811 that there were only four or five builders of stage-coaches in London of which Powell and Baker (late Browns) of Ray Street, Cow Cross was the principal. In 1827 this firm, then trading as Wright and Powell, was employing 100 men. They specialised in stage-coach construction, undertaking the building of no private vehicles except for the rare client who required a four-in-hand coach. In 1835 this firm was acknowledged the largest in London, hiring out 200 to 250 coaches operating 20,000 miles daily. They were using three London establishments from which to carry on their trade. Wright had by this date as his partner, the brother of Benjamin Worthy Horne, one of the major coach operators. Next in size was John Waude whose works were in the Old Kent Road. He hired out 100 to 120 coaches and employed 70 to 80 men. He was capable of building 16 coaches for a Mr Lacey of Manchester within a nine week period. Boswell of Whitechapel was also mentioned, but said to be conducting a limited business.[2]

1. Robson's London Commercial Directory (15th edn 1835) lists 258 coach and harness makers, while Pigot & Co's Classified Directory of London Trades (1836) lists 279. Both totals refer to inner London and additional builders are listed for the suburbs.

2. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p42; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 11 p50, Appendix 15 pp 64-65, Appendix 18 pp 71-72

As the number of firms capable of undertaking the contract for supplying coaches on the national scale required was limited, the Post Office offered the contract in three divisions, the Southern counties with a guaranteed distance of 3,000 miles daily, Midlands with a guarantee of 4,000 miles and the North with 2,500 miles. Nine tenders were received of which the cheapest was for 1 5/8d a double mile for the Midlands and 1¾d for the Southern from Charles Lines of Great Surrey Street, Blackfriars. It was however felt that this could not be accepted as he was "in a small way of business only", hiring out only about 30 omnibuses and a number of short stage-coaches, and it was thought that he did not have the means of performing the service. The most satisfactory tenders were considered those of Wright and Horne of London and Walter Williams of Bristol who were jointly awarded the contracts for the Southern and Midland coaches at 2 1/8d per double mile. The contract for the Northern region was awarded jointly to John Croall of Edinburgh and Patrick Wallace of Perth at 2d a double mile. George Schillibeer, of omnibus fame, submitted a tender of 2d a double mile for either the Southern or Midland contracts though his resources would hardly seem capable of undertaking the enterprise, while Vidler despite his disqualification submitted a tender for 2½d a double mile.[1]

Despite the short time of less than six months allowed to the contractors to provide entirely new coaches and facilities for their maintenance, no major dislocation of service due to the changeover was experienced. This was largely because the contractors selected were large well-established firms with the ability to meet the problems raised. Wright and Horne, as already stated, were the largest London stage-coach suppliers and were already hiring vehicles to many of the major stage-coach proprietors who were also responsible for operating the mail-coaches. The firm had works at Turnmill Street, Clerkenwell, Great New Street, Fetter Lane and Little Knightrider Street,

1. POR Post 10/34/22, Post 10/34/31-40, Post 10/34/43, Post 10/34/45

Doctors Commons in 1835, but the mail-coach business was centred at a new address in Gough Street, Grays Inn Road which Wright had taken over from J. Howroyd another coachbuilder. Joseph Wright, the senior partner, had 26 years experience in the trade.[1] Walter Williams of Temple Street, Bristol, who was the joint contractor for the Southern and Midland divisions, was an equally well established builder. The firm was founded in 1815 and supplied most of the coach operators working from Bristol and Bath. It had built at least one vehicle to mail-coach specification for private use. William Chaplin, one of the leading London coach operators, had a poor opinion of provincial coach builders and their vehicles, but specifically exempted Williams from his strictures. Wright and Williams clearly had problems preparing to undertake such a contract at short notice, not the least of which was the provision of 140 new patent mail-coaches in less than six months, but had the capacity and experience to cope.[2] Croall of Edinburgh was not only the major Scottish coachbuilder, but unlike his English counterparts was also one of the largest operators of stage-coach services in Scotland. His first coachbuilding contract with the Post Office came in 1830 when he built and hired to them a number of two wheeled "curricles" designed solely for mail conveyance on the post route from Edinburgh to Morpeth and Newcastle via Wooler. In 1835 the partnership between John Croall and Patrick Wallace of Perth was declared to be "the only stage coach builders in Scotland who would undertake so extensive a contract" as that for providing mail-coaches for the Northern region. Despite this however not all the mail-coaches leased by Croall were of his manufacture which suggests that his building capacity was insufficient to fully meet the Post Office requirements. The vehicles supplied failed to please the operating contractors entirely, and were the subject

1. BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 9 p46, Appendix 14 p59, Appendix 15 p64; Post Office London Directory (35th edn 1835); Robson's London Directory (15th edn 1835, 16th edn 1836)

2. PORPost 10/134; BPP 1835(313) LXVIII 399 Appendix 2 p12, Appendix 19 p75

of a petition to the Post Office in 1839 in which it was declared that they were too heavy, of clumsy and defective construction and appearance and not kept in a proper state of repair. A Post Office investigation found the charges generally justified and ordered the heaviest coaches to be withdrawn and the other put in a proper state of repair as speedily as possible. At this date Croall and Wallace had workshops and coach-houses for spare vehicles additionally at Carlisle, York, Leeds, Preston and Manchester.[1]

The contracts that came into effect on 6 January 1836 were for seven years and were therefore advertised for public tender once again in 1842. Between these dates however the railway had extensively reduced the length and nature of the mail-coach network. In 1835 tenders had been required for 5062 double miles daily for the Southern and Midland areas and 1557 double miles for the North and guaranteed daily mileages of 7,000 miles for the former and 2,500 miles for the latter were written into the contracts. The reduction of route mileage caused by the impact of railways was a matter of concern both to the coach builders and the Post Office. Many of the routes ceased to operate from London, terminating at provincial railheads to which the mails were conveyed by train. This caused difficulties for Joseph Wright whose main facilities were in London, and who was obliged to maintain an increased number of small provincial depots for coach repair and storage. When the contract came up for renewal in January 1842 only 3190 double miles of route remained for the Southern and Midland areas, a reduction of 37% although 1760 double miles for the Northern region showed a rise of 13%. Guaranteed mileages under the new contracts were reduced to 3,000 for the Southern and Midland areas and 2,500 for the North. A renewal of

1. POR Post 1/64/24; Post 10/34/31, Post 10/109, Post 10/140, Post 10/148, Post 10/150; A.R.B. Haldane, Three Centuries of Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) p81; Leslie Gardiner, Stage-Coach to John O'Groats (1961) pp 148-50

the contract for the Southern and Midland areas was achieved by Wright and Williams in 1842. The reduced scale of the Post Office contract was probably less of a source of concern to Joseph Wright than for other builders for he had started to diversify his activities. Since 1838 he had operated a depot at 2, Munster Street, Regents Park for the delivery and collection of goods despatched on the London & Birmingham Railway and was responsible for the manufacture of railway rolling stock for this company.[1] In the Northern region John Croall ceased to act as contractor and Patrick Wallace of Perth continued in partnership with Johnathan Dunn and Thomas Rowlandson of Lancaster at the reduced rate of 43/64d a single mile, or half that amount for any distance the coach was conveyed by railway. Croall was clearly still interested in Post Office contracts for both he and Wright submitted tenders in 1843 to supply mail-coaches in Ireland. Wright's tender of 2½d a double mile was however undercut by Croall's at 2 3/8 d and the contract was awarded to the latter.[2] The rapid advance of railway construction in the period 1844-47 meant that by early 1847 the Post Office was operating a network of routes smaller than that guaranteed to the contractors who were being paid for coaches that did not operate. As a result the Post Office prematurely terminated the agreements in July 1848 and advertised for new contracts without guaranteed mileage. Only one tender was received, that of Valentine O'Connor of Dublin at 2d a double mile. This the Post Office accepted.[3]

In Ireland up to 1832 a different system of providing mail-coaches prevailed from that in the rest of the British

1. POR Post 10/12, Post 10/13, Post 10/16, Post 10/34/76, Post 10/104, Post 10/134; Post 35/48/337, Post 35/48/397; BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1; Robson's London Directory (20th edn 1840); Post Office London Directory (39th edn 1838)
2. POR Post 1/63/162; Post 10/16; Post 35/48/337, Post 35/48/400
3. POR Post 1/86/726

Isles as it was usual for the operating contractor to provide his own coaches. Attempts were made at various dates to encourage the adoption of a standard pattern of mail-coach but no success was achieved before the union of the British and Irish Post Offices in 1831. In connection with the first mail-coach routes in Ireland, those from Dublin to Cork and Dublin to Belfast opened in 1789, two coaches were built in London and presented to the contractors by the Marquis of Buckingham. These were no doubt intended to act as a pattern for the future building of vehicles. John Anderson, one of the major Irish coach operators, encouraged John Vidler to set up a mail-coach factory in Ireland. Anderson was to finance the venture and to be repaid from the profits from the leasing of coaches at 4d to 5d a double mile, a higher rate than in the remainder of the British Isles as Irish roads were inferior. The enterprise could not have endured for long however.[1] The failure to ensure uniformity was commented upon by Sir Edward Lees, Secretary to the Irish Post Office in April 1819 when he admitted to a Parliamentary committee that

> "In Ireland we have no sure principle for the construction of mail coaches, the contractors build their own coaches according to their fancy, but they are limited to a certain number of passengers by contract."

A model did exist which was supposed to be conformed to when constructing mail-coaches but this failed to ensure uniformity. A further attempt to enforce a standard type of vehicle was made in 1819 when the Irish Post Office publicly advertised for tenders for the supply of coaches. The lowest tender, for 130 guineas, was received from a Birmingham coachbuilder and a number of coaches were ordered with the idea of supplying them to the operating contractors and encouraging their use. Efforts to obtain contracts for the hire of standard pattern coaches for the use of operators on the British pattern were however unsuccessful. In Ireland coaching was of a more limited extent than in the rest of the United Kingdom, and there were fewer entrepreneurs with the necessary resources to undertake the supply or operation of mail-coaches. This

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 17-18; G.N. Wright, An Historical Guide to Ancient and Modern Dublin (1821) p297

lack of competition meant that the Post Office often had no option but to continue contracts with existing operators largely on their terms. The number of passengers officially allowed to be carried had frequently to be exceeded in order to retain or obtain contractors, and in 1820 six inside and four outside passengers on mail-coaches was not uncommon. This pattern was to carry on into the 1830s when four inside and up to nine outside passengers were carried.[1] The lack of conformity with the pattern in the rest of the United Kingdom brought forth strictures both from officials of the British Post Office and Parliamentary commissioners alike. Typical of the criticism was that of the Holyhead Road Commissioners who in their fifth report issued in 1819 stated

> "At present the Mail system in Ireland has only the name, without any of that style in appearance, or that steadiness, comfort and security in use, which so eminently distinguish the Mail Coaches of England."[2]

Following the merger of the Irish Post Office with that of the remainder of the United Kingdom, Charles Johnson, the Mail-coach Superintendent, was sent to Ireland to report on measures necessary for bringing proceedures more closely into line with those used in the rest of Britain. He found only two Irish coachbuilders capable of producing mail-coaches in the numbers required, Peter Purcell and Frederick Bourne, both of whom had been active for many years not only in building mail-coaches but also operating many of the major Irish mail-coach routes. Irish mail-coaches were found to be "not at all uniform in shape or colour and immensely loaded on top."[3] Limits on the carriage of

1. BPP 1819(548) V 157 p77; 1820(213) IX 451; 1822(513) VI 241 p14; 1829(353) XII 1 p64; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 pp 80,137

2. BPP 1819(548) V 157 p44

3. Richard Bourne, an Irish mail-coach contractor, claimed in July 1832 that Irish mail-coaches were superior to those in the rest of Britain as they had incorporated improvements in line with the latest stage-coach practice. English mail-coaches he described as being "cumberous, heavy machines" and "the only public carriages which have not undergone improvement in their construction." (BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p286).

luggage on the roof laid down in the contracts and by an act of the Irish parliament were equally ignored. A mail-coach was shipped from England as a pattern and Purcell and Bourne agreed that they were prepared to build coaches in conformity with it. Francis Freeling, the Secretary to the Post Office, was not in favour of the automatic award of the contract to Purcell and Bourne, especially as they were involved in horsing mail-coaches themselves, and the contract was therefore advertised for public tender. It must have come as no surprise that the only tenders worth considering were those of Peter Purcell and Frederick Bourne both surprisingly at the same price of 4½d a double mile. A five year contract was entered into from 28 May 1833 divided equally between the two firms.[1] When the contract came up for renewal in 1838 Peter Purcell provided the only tender and the contract was renewed for another five years. By this date the firm is listed as Purcell and Jameson, "coach proprietors and coach builders" of Russell Place, Circular Road. In 1843 the Post Office policy of throwing open the contract to public tender was vindicated. Four tenders were received. Purcell in association with W.H. Bourne and James Hartley submitted a tender for 3d a double mile. This was the cheapest Irish tender, but with the decline in coaching in the remainder of Britain caused by the extension of railway travel, a wider interest was aroused, and both Joseph Wright and John Croall tendered. It was the latter who was successful at 2 3/8d per double mile.[2] Purcell protested loudly at this "foreign" competition and offered to undertake the contract at the lowest tender price. He claimed that the building of the coaches in Scotland would make Irish workmen unemployed and "would be likely to occasion great excitment in Ireland, and to be productive of unfortunate consequences in the present state of the country." Despite a deputation sent to meet the

1. POR Post 1/42/54; Post 36/3/362; WSRO Goodwood 1555

2. John Croall already had connections with Irish stage-coaching through the operation of the "Erin-go-Bragh" coach from Edinburgh to Dublin via the Port Patrick to Donaghadee route. (Gardiner op cit pp 150-59)

Chancellor of the Exchequer and memorials from several Irish cities emphasising that Purcell's "enterprise and public spirit have been eminently useful in opening new sources of employment in Ireland" and claiming that Purcell's and Bourne's works might have to close if the contract was lost, Croall's agreement was confirmed. The new contract saved the Post Office £1,954-7-9d per annum and it was pointed out that if the whole £7,400 per annum paid to the contractor was expended in wages of 30/- a week it would only provide employment for 94 men. Although the coaches were built in Scotland they would be repaired in Ireland. The mail cars operated by Charles Bianconi were from the mid 1820s all constructed and repaired at his works at Clonmel.[1]

Although the century following 1750, coinciding with the first phase of the industrial revolution, has been recognised as a period of extensive capital investment in transportation facilities, attention has been centred on the large sums raised for canal development, dock provision and from the 1830s railway construction. In the field of road transportation, with the exception of government sponsered schemes such as the Highland road improvements, the Carlisle to Glasgow road and the London to Holyhead route, units of investment have been regarded as small. Turnpike trusts individually involved only a limited length of road financed by limited local capital.[2] A small capital requirement has been assumed for those who operated road services for goods and passengers or facilities in connection with such ventures. Few names in this field have received the attention of historians. In goods transit only Pickfords is regarded as an exception to the general rule of low capitalisation and local significance. In passenger transport the names of W.J. Chaplin, B.W. Horne and E. Sherman, the major London stage and mail-coach operators, are the only

1. POR Post 1/62/230; BPP 1843(561) LI 31; Pettigrew and Oulton's Dublin Directory (Dublin 1837); M.O.'C Bianconi and S.J. Watson, Bianconi - King of the Irish Roads (Dublin 1962) p67

2. In 1840 the average length of the 53 Sussex turnpike trusts was just over 12¼ miles and the amount of bonded or mortgaged debt averaged £5,332 per trust (BPP 1840(280) XXVII 15)

entrepreneurs regarded as operating on the basis of a large capital outlay.[1] London coachbuilders have been entirely ignored, yet it must be clear that persons like John Vidler, Joseph Wright and John Waude had very substantial amounts of capital invested in their business enterprises. The failure to place sufficient emphasis on the fact that coach operators in the main leased their vehicles, has tended to over-emphasise the capital involvement of this group and under-emphasise the financial involvement of the builders, who were obliged to finance and maintain, in a number of cases, a fleet of many hundreds of coaches for hire together with a national network of repair facilities. These large London firms had their counterpart in a number of smaller but very substantial provincial concerns such as Walter Williams of Bristol, John Croall of Edinburgh and Peter Purcell of Dublin. A valuation of Pickford's assets in April 1817 indicated that freehold and leasehold estates, boats, horses, waggons, utensils and chattels were worth £48,000.[2] Although no similar valuation exists for any of the major coachbuilders Vidler claimed in July 1792 that the capital involved in his mail-coach manufactory was nearly £30,000. At this date nearly 150 mail-coaches were being leased by the concern, but this total was to nearly double by the 1820s and to rise further in the 1830s. Joseph Wright maintained a fleet of 200 to 250 stage-coaches before he took on the contract for the supply of mail-coaches in 1836. In the 1820s and 1830s the value of a new mail-coach was estimated to be about £180 and that for a stage-coach about £150. A mail-coach had a life of about seven years. Assuming an average value of £70 per vehicle, the fleet of coaches owned by a large

1. These coaching entrepreneurs are dealt with in chapter 8 pp 257-59

2. E Halfpenny, "Pickfords: Expansion and Crisis in the Early Nineteenth Century", Business History Vol 1 No 2 June 1959 p119.

3. A comparison might usefully be made between the capital involved in this coachworks, having a monopoly in the supply of coaches to a government department, and that of the main naval dockyards. In the case of the latter capital investment was higher. The fixed assets at Chatham were valued at £56,059 in 1698, but other yards near London had a lower cpitalisation - Deptford £28,641, Woolwich £15,801 and Sheerness £6,960. (D.C. Coleman, "Naval Dockyards Under the Later Stuarts" EHR 2nd series Vol VI No 2 (1953) p139

entrepreneur like Vidler or Wright must have represented a capital involvement of nearly £20,000 exclusive of premises, both in London and the provinces, stocks of materials, tools and equipment etc. The capital invested by these leading coachbuilders was also very substantial if the capitalisation of firms in other industries is considered. In the rapidly expanding English cotton industry only four manufacturers in the mid 1790s carried insurance cover in excess of £30,000 and in Scotland no manufacturer appears to have reached this figure. David Dale's New Lanark mills were insured for £24,400 but of 41 other Scottish maills insured with the Sun Fire Office only 2 exceeded £10,000.[1] In the Scottish brewing industry at the end of the eighteenth century the largest entrepreneur, Charles Addison of Bo'ness had fixed capital of just over £3,000 and stock in hand valued at just over £4,000. The next largest brewer had only about half this capital involvement.[2] Although there is some debate on the reliability of insurance valuations as a reflection of capitalisation of commercial enterprises, the general consensus of opinion appears to be that they provide a substantially accurate estimate if used on an industry or regional basis, though for individual firms care must be exercised.[3] Such comparisons as have been made must demonstrate the substantial nature of the major coachbuilders in the industrial scene as a whole, and in transport in particular.

Although the Post Office clearly favoured the use of patent mail-coaches over which they had a greater control, they

1. J.P.P. Higgins and Sidney Pollard, Aspects of Capital Investment in Great Britain 1750-1850(1971) pp 92-93, 102-03

2. Ian Donnachie, "Sources of Capital and Capitalization in the Scottish Brewing Industry c1750-1830", EHR 2nd series Vol XXX No 2 May 1977 p281

3. Higgins & Pollard op cit pp 110-13, but see also Dr J Batt's remarks on pp 115-19 where he claims that insurance valuations of firms in the Scottish cotton industry in many cases undervalue the capital resources used.

used existing stage-coaches to carry mail where the traffic was insufficient to establish a mail-coach. The vehicles used on these routes would be supplied by the contractor and would not conform to a standard pattern. In 1838 there were 72 routes operated by these "second class" mail-coaches, the vehicles being supplied by no fewer than 43 different makers, including occasionally mail-coach builders. Four out of the 58 English routes used coaches supplied by Williams of Bristol, one Scottish route used a coach by Wallace of Perth and two of the five Irish routes used vehicles by Purcell of Dublin. As the routes were usually short distance rural feeders and branches, small provincial coachbuilders supplied most vehicles.[1] This type of route was on the increase in the early 1840s for as mails were transferred to the railways, the Post Office more and more utilised short distance stages feeding the trunk rail routes. Eighty routes existed in England and Wales in 1843, all but two of which had been established since 1838.[2]

Attempts were made in the 1820s and 1830s to interest the Post Office in the use of steam road vehicles for the conveyance of mails. Projectors found Post Office officials cool and cautious however, preferring to play a game of waiting upon results. With regard to an offer made in November 1826 by a Mr Thorold to call at the Post Office to explain his ideas, Freeling commented to the Postmaster-General

> "I submit that your Lordship cannot encourage a correspondence with individuals with the view of ascertaining whether or not it be applicable to the purpose of propelling the mail coaches & that it would be the proper time to consider the subject when the experiment has been made by others & is found to answer the proposed objects." 3

1. BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 pp 228-30
2. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p2; 1843(602) LIII 327
3. POR Post 42/114/583

John Farey giving evidence before a Parliamentary committee on steam carriages in 1831 suggested a reward of £10,000 from government funds to the first person who successfully and regularly operated a service from London to Bristol adding that "the establishment of that one coach to carry the Mail would be worth the money to the public whenever it was accomplished." In October 1834 Sir Richard Broun memorialised the Treasury to adopt a radical plan to take roads into state control, and the operation of a uniform system of steam carriages in conjunction with the Post Office. He saw in such a scheme not only improvements in communication but a recipe for the elimination of all the nation's financial and social difficulties.[1] Both government and the Post Office were however wise to play the waiting game. Experiments with steam carriages were frequent in the 1830s but neither in speed nor reliability could they regularly match horse drawn vehicles. Walter Hancock in August 1835 claimed a speed of 9.6 m.p.h. from London to Marlborough and 9.8 m.p.h. on the return journey but only if stoppages of 4 hours 6 minutes and 4 hours 22 minutes respectively are excluded from the reckoning. In November 1833 Charles Dance achieved a speed of 7 m.p.h. on the Holyhead road between London and Towcester but again only if stoppages are excluded, and the vehicle had only proceeded six miles before it was necessary to effect the first repair. An attempt by Hancock to interest the Post Office in his London to Birmingham Steam Coach Company was rejected. By the mid 1830s it was clear to the Post Office that if steam was to be used in mail conveyance it would be on the railway.[2]

1. Sir Richard Broun, Appeal to our rulers and ruled in behalf of a consolidation of the Post Office, Roads and Mechanical Conveyance for the service of the state (1834)

2. BPP 1831(324) VIII 203 p47; Walter Hancock, Narrative of Twelve Years' Experiments, (1824-36) of the Practicability and Advantage of Employing Steam in Carriages on Common Roads (1838) p72; Thomas Telford et el, Report of the Result of an Experimental Journey upon the Mail Coach Line of the Holyhead Road (1833); Harper op cit Vol II p268; Anthony Bird, Roads & Vehicles (1969) pp 154-57

Chapter 8 - Mail-coach Proprietors and their Operations

It was never the intention of John Palmer that the Post Office should operate the mail-coaches. He was interested in the coaches as a means to an end, the fast efficient and safe carriage of mail. Existing stage-coaches were however too slow, too overburdened with passengers and parcels and too lax in their timekeeping. Palmer was moreover determined that the coaches that conveyed the mails should be effectively controlled by the Post Office to ensure reliability. They were to depart at a time laid down by the Post Office which was convenient to the despatch of mails, they were to work to a rigid timetable and to this end were to be lightly loaded and regulated by a Post Office employee, the guard. Passengers were to be carried but as the number was lower than that allowed on stage-coaches, the higher cost per passenger conveyed, had to be covered by the subsidy paid for mail-conveyance and extending to mail-coaches the remission from road toll already enjoyed by other vehicles carrying mails. Palmer realised that the passenger conveyance side of the business must be left to the professional coach proprietors who knew the trade. A coach of standard design specified by the Post Office was found to be necessary but the proprietors were to provide the horses and driver, to advertise the service, book the passengers and exclusively collect and benefit from the fares. For the Post Office to enter the realm of passenger carriage was to invite fierce competition from existing stage-coach proprietors. This could be bought off by allowing them to retain their private monopoly of coaching passengers.

When seeking proprietors to operate a mail-coach route the use of public advertisement was seldom resorted to. The method adopted was that established by Palmer from the outset of the mail-coach plan, to seek out the strongest stage-coach proprietor along the line of road to be covered and to offer the service to him and his partners at a uniform price fixed by the Post Office. Final agreement would be concluded at a meeting, either at the G.P.O. in London or in the country, at which all

the partners in the coach company, who were to horse the mail, would meet with the Mail-coach Superintendent. This system was defended by successive Superintendents who pointed out that advertising for competitive tenders might result in the appointment of contractors offering the lowest tender who might lack capital resources. They would invite fierce competition from existing major proprietors on the line of road with the object of making the new service unremunerative and forcing it off the road. Regularity and stability were the two aims to be sought. Only when exorbitant payment was demanded from the Post Office by contractors at the time of renewal was public advertisement resorted to. In such cases failure to obtain a tender sufficiently low might result in the coach being replaced by a mail cart in the hope that the previous contractor might, rather than lose the contract, lower his demands. A Parliamentary committee which looked into the matter of horsing contracts in 1837 recommended a system of open competition, but its implementation came at a time of declining profits in the coaching trade because of an increasing volume of steamship competition and the imminent onslaught of railway competition, which induced a reluctance in the coaching trade to seek after mail-coach contracts. In Ireland a system of open advertisement had been practised much earlier but as coaching was on a limited scale, there was often no competition for such contracts and the Post Office were obliged to appoint the only stage-coach proprietor capable of taking on the work. In Ireland contractors before the 1830s demanded and received long term contracts. The Dublin to Limerick contract signed in 1796 was for 30 years. Contracts in other parts of the United Kingdom were for unspecified periods but always subject to termination by either party at three months notice.[1]

Amongst the stage-coach proprietors, the most important

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 9, 22, Appendix 2 p50; 1829(353) XII 1 p64, Appendix 10 p145, Appendix 96 p437, Appendix 102 p486; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 4 p20; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 pp 4-5, Appendix 13 pp 37-41, Appendix 58 p109

and well known figures were those who horsed the long distance[1] mail and stage-coaches from London. Each owned one or more important inns in the capital from which the services were operated and administered. This system was a long standing one, for already by the beginning of the eighteenth century innkeepers often owned the coach services that operated from their premises. Inns were also beginning to specialise and in 1715 of the 136 which were the terminal points of coach and carrier services, 45 were largely or exclusively dealing with coach services and 52 dealing largely or exclusively with carrier services. The larger inns were already by this date substantial businesses, the Belle Sauvage in Ludgate Hill being the terminus for 26 coach and 3 carrier services.[2] Although the volume of coaching traffic was to increase substantially over the next century, the number of points of departure in the capital did not. In 1821 there were only 50 inns of departure for coaches in London and of these only ten were the starting points for mail-coaches. The inn most heavily involved with mail-coach traffic was the Swan With Two Necks in Lad Lane, successively owned by Thomas Wilson, William Waterhouse and in the late 1820s acquired by William James Chaplin, from which substantially more than one third of the services were operated by mail-coach. Also owned by Chaplin were the White Horse, Fetter Lane, the Angel, St. Clements and the Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street from which other mail-coaches departed. Other inns important in mail-coaching were the Golden Cross, Charing Cross owned successively by George Bolton, John Cross, William Horne and his son Benjamin Worthy Horne, and the Bull and Mouth, Bull and Mouth Street, St. Martin's le Grand owned by John Willan and from 1823 by Edward Sherman. Some of the large and important inns such as the Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill and the Scaracen's Head, Snow Hill played only a minor role in the mail-coach network, but the majority of the inns operating

1. The term long distance coaches is used to distinguish these from local short stage services operating within a ten mile radius from central London.

2. J.A. Chartres, "The Capital's Provincial Eyes: London's Inns in the Early Eighteenth Century" The London Journal Vol 3 No 1 May 1977 p33

solely stage-coach services represented a much more modest scale of operation.[1]

Table 47 - Mail and stage-coach routes operating from London inns

Date	Inns from which mail and stage-coach services departed		Inns from which only stage-coach services departed	
	Number of inns	Av. number of long distance routes per inn	Number of inns	Av. number of long distance routes per inn
1810	10	20.4	22	7.3
1815	10	29	34	8.3
1821	10	30.5	40	12.3

Sources: Cary's New Itinerary (4th edn 1810), (6th edn 1815), (9th edn 1821)

At provincial level inn proprietors at the main coaching centres benefitted from the substantial coaching traffic. They not only provided food and accommodation for travellers but were concerned in company with London proprietors in horsing mail and stage-coaches. In addition these inn keepers provided branch and cross coach services feeding and deriving custom from the main road traffic. Provincial inns could in some cases be as busy as the large London points of departure. In 1826 for instance the Swan Hotel, Birmingham was the calling point for 15 mail-coaches and 33 stage-coaches daily.[2] Important coaching centres contained several such inns, some on a very substantial scale. The Angel at Stilton had stabling for 300 horses and the Scaracen's Head, Northampton for 150 horses. Towns developed along the main coaching roads whose prosperity depended on the coaching traffic. Such were Dunstable, Northampton, Leicester, Derby, Ashbourne and Buxton on the Manchester road, Stamford, Grantham, Newark and Doncaster on the Great North Road and Towcester and Stoney

1. See table 48 p256. Attempts to provide figures for the period prior to 1810 and post 1821 were made but the few directories where coaching data is so arranged as to make analysis possible appear to be inaccurate e.g. the number of mail-coaches are fewer than those recorded in appendix 4 pp 372-80

2. Cary's New Itinerary (10th edn 1826)

Table 48 - London inns of departure for mail and long-distance coaches 1810-21

Inn	1810			1815			1821		
	mail-coach services	stage-coach services	% of total services accounted for by mail-coaches	mail-coach services	stage-coach services	% of total services accounted for by mail-coaches	mail-coach services	stage-coach services	% of total services accounted for by mail-coaches
Angel, St Clements Dane, Strand	5	12	29.4%	5	17	22.7%	5	18	21.7%
Bell & Crown, Holborn	2	12	14.3%	3	16	15.8%	3	22	12%
Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill	-	16	-	1	28	3.4%	-	24	-
Bull, Holborn	1	4	20%	-	11	-	-	11	-
Bull and Mouth, St Martin le Grand	6	27	18.2%	7	31	18.4%	6	30	16.7%
Golden Cross, Charing Cross	4	32	11.1%	6	49	11.1%	9	47	16.1%
Kings Arms, Snow Hill	-	3	-	-	15	-	1	21	4.5%
Scaracen's Head, Aldgate	1	9	10%	1	10	9.1%	1	11	8.3%
Scaracen's Head, Snow Hill	1	19	5%	1	25	3.8%	1	26	3.7%
Spread Eagle, Gracechurch St	2	15	11.8%	3	26	10.3%	2	31	6.1%
Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane	10	17	37%	13	16	44.8%	12	25	32.4%
White Horse, Fetter Lane	1	24	4%	2	31	6.1%	2	32	5.9%
	33	190	14.8%	42	275	13.2%	42	298	12.4%

Sources: Cary's New Itinerary 4th edn(1810), 6th edn(1815), 9th edn(1821)

Note: Long-distance coaches are defined as those operating more than ten miles from London

Stratford on the Chester Road. Between these major coaching towns, situated at about every ten miles, were smaller settlements such as Hounslow, Staines, Egham and Bagshot on the Southampton and Salisbury road, each as much reliant as their larger brethren on the provision of fresh horses for the coaches, post horses, and food and accommodation for travellers generally. Evidence of the importance of such inns can be seen in the various editions of Patterson's Roads and Cary's Itinerary where they are comprehensively listed, and the character of many of the towns, and the inns that gave them this character, can be seen by the traveller today.[1]

Much of the London long distance coaching traffic had by the 1830s become concentrated in the hands of three proprietors, William James Chaplin, Benjamin Worthy Horne and Edward Sherman, all of whom operated both mail and stage-coaches.

Table 49 - Number of long distance mail and stage-coach routes operated by the principal coach proprietors 1836

Proprietor	Number of routes operated		Percentage of routes operating from London
	As sole proprietor	Shared proprietorship	
William James Chaplin	41	17	14.5%
Benjamin Worthy Horne	50	9	15.9%
Edward Sherman	25	7	8.3%
	116	33	38.7%

Source: Alan Bates, Directory of Stage Coach Services 1836 (Newton Abbot 1969) pp 1-81

Many of Horne's routes were however shorter distance services covering the south-eastern and southern counties, whereas a

1. Alan Everitt, "The English Urban Inn 1560-1760" in Alan Everitt (ed), Perspectives in English Urban History (1973) pp 95, 100-02

larger proportion of Chaplin's and Sherman's services were made up of longer distance routes to Scotland and the North. This is reflected in the fact that in 1836 Chaplin owned or hired 106 coaches to operate his services compared with Horne's 92 and Sherman's 77.[1]

The dominance of Chaplin, Horne and Sherman in the London coaching trade was the result of a policy of acquiring, when oppportunity presented, additional inns and the coaching business that went with them, from former rival operators. These three proprietors employed substantial capital to maintain their operations. Chaplin in 1835 owned around 1,200 horses and by 1838 this figure was said to have risen to 1,800. This at an average value of around £20 a horse represented a capital outlay of between £24,000 and £36,000 alone. Apart from stables in London, he had additional ones at Purley on the Brighton road, Hounslow to the west of London and Whetstone to the north. Chaplin owned four London coaching inns and was said to employ 2,000 men and have a gross income estimated at £500,000 per annum by the late 1830s.[2] Benjamin Worthy Horne owned apart from his main establishment, the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, three coaching inns in Holborn and the Cross Keys, Wood Street in the City. By 1827 he was employing 700 to 800 horses and had stables at Barnet and Finchley. The Golden Cross hotel itself represented a considerable capital asset for when the old hotel was sold for demolition in 1827 in connection with the Metropolitan Improvements it fetched

1. Philip S. Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p50 misinterprets the figures listed by Bates and suggests that Chaplin, Horne and Sherman were responsible for 275 out of the 342 long distance services from London in 1836, i.e. 80.4% of such services, and this information is unfortunately repeated by Eric Pawson, Transport and Economy(1977) p33.

2. BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 19 p75; Charles G. Harper, Stage Coach and Mail in Days of Yore(1903) Vol II pp 200,204; Philip S. Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p50; David Mountfield, The Coaching Age (1976) p99

together with some other houses £30,000. A new hotel with frontages to the Strand and Duncannon Street was opened in 1832.[1] Edward Sherman owned 700 horses and had at the Bull and Mouth underground stabling for 400. He too was engaged in hotel development and in 1828 completely reconstructed the Bull and Mouth at a cost of £60,000 and renamed it the Queen's Hotel.[2] In addition to their coaching inns, which tended to be in the City, along Holborn or in the Strand, proprietors maintained coach booking offices and agencies in the more fashionable streets of the West End at which many coaches would pick up passengers.[3]

The London mail-coach proprietors usually operated the mail-coaches with their own horses for the first one or two stages from the capital.[4] Other partners in their coaching company, each of whom were independent entrepreneurs in their own right, successively horsed the coach from that point to its final destination. This pattern is clearly seen in 1792 when George Boulton of the Golden Cross, Charing Cross was horsing the London to Holyhead mail as far as St Albans, 22 miles[5] and the London to Wisbeach mail to Waltham Cross, 13 miles. Thomas Wilson of the Swan With Two Necks, Lad Lane

1. Harper op cit Vol II pp 213-14; Bagwell op cit p50; E. Beresford Chancellor, The Annals of the Strand(1912) p345; Stephen E. Hutchins, At the Sign of the Golden Cross(1909) p19

2. BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p82; G.A. Thrupp, The History of Coaches (1877) p115; N.C. Salway, The Regency Road(1957) p97; Harold W. Hart, "Sherman and the Bull and Mouth" Journal of Transport History Vol 5 No 1 (May 1961) p13

3. Apart from the Bull and Mouth Western Coach Office at 40 Regent Circus, and the Spread Eagle Office, 220 Picadilly there were three other picking up points in Picadilly and three in Oxford Street in 1830 (Robson's London Directory)

4. Up to c1820 a mail-coach stage (the distance that a coach would work before changing horses) was about 10 to 11 miles, but subsequently the speed at which the coaches operated was increased and horses had to be changed more frequently and a stage of six to seven miles became common.

4. All distances are given in terms of network milage i.e. single miles. The same contractor would normally be required to work the coach in each direction daily.

was horsing the Exeter via Salisbury mail to Staines, 21 miles, the Exeter via Bath and also the Bristol mails to Brentford, 10 miles, and the Liverpool and also the Carlisle mails to Redbourne, 27 miles. John Willan of the Bull and Mouth horsed the Shrewsbury mail to Beaconsfield, 20 miles, the Leeds mail to St Albans, 22 miles and the Edinburgh mail to Waltham Cross, 13 miles. A few contractors horsed mails for longer distances, such as Christopher Ibberson of the George and Blue Boar, Holborn who horsed the Worcester mail to Dorchester-on-Thames, 53 miles, and Ibberson & Co were contractors on the Dover route for the complete distance to Canterbury (58½ miles). John Roberts horsed both the Norwich mails, one for the first 63 miles of its route and the other for 53. By the mid 1830s the situation had changed to some degree. London contractors were tending to horse coaches for longer distances, and only in one case was less than 20 miles covered from the capital before another contractor took over. In most cases the distance operated by the first contractor was 25 to 30 miles, and in a number of cases around 50 miles (see table 50 p261). Much has been written about coach rivalry, price wars and attempts by rival proprietors to drive opposition off the road. This was certainly a feature of coaching, but the situation in the mid 1830s with mail-coaches shows that there must have been a considerable degree of co-operation between coach proprietors, as a number of routes were jointly operated. This feature of coaching seems not to have been commented upon previously. Attention has also been concentrated in the past on the giants of London coaching but in terms of distance horsed by them they accounted for only a relatively small percentage of the route milage. If the distances operated by all London mail-coach proprietors is added together it only accounts for 14.9% of route milage in England and Wales in 1792 and this had fallen slightly to 12.7% in 1836.[1]

This emphasises the collective importance of provincial coaching contractors. Outside London the pattern was for

1. GL Gr 6.3.2; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 28 pp 54-58

Table 50 - Distance horsed by London mail-coach proprietors

1792	Distance operated		1836	Distance operated	
Name of contractor	As sole contractor	In partnership with others	Name of contractor	As sole contractor	In partnership with others
George Boulton	35	-	William Chaplin	336	36½
Grave & Waldgrave	21	-	Chaplin & Fagg	85	-
Christopher Ibberson	53	58½	Chaplin & Sherman	50½	-
John Roberts	116	-	Fagg, Fagg & Mountain	51	-
Hester Watson	36	-	William Gilbert	22½	-
John Willan	66	-	Joseph Hearn	54	-
Thomas Wilson	96	-	B.W. Horne	135	-
			Edward Sherman	137	15
			White, White & Palliser	31	-
	423	58½		902	51½

Percentage of route mileage in England & Wales operated by London mail-coach contractors = 14.9%

Source: GL Gr 6.3.2.

Percentage of route mileage in England & Wales operated by London mail-coach contractors = 12.7%

Source: BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 28 pp 54-58

Note: Distances are given in terms of single miles. Contractors were required to operate double this distance each day (one coach in and one coach out).

small scale operation in the main.[1] In 1792 over 15% of all contractors horsed less than ten miles of mail-coach route and by 1836 this figure had risen to nearly 30%, though because of the increased speeds by this date more horses would have been required for each mile of route and the stages would have been shortened. Provincial contractors would also probably have been responsible for horsing stage-coaches but even so many would keep in their stables less than 20 coach horses. The average length of road horsed by mail-coach contractors remained throughout just over twenty miles. Not all the large horsing contractors were however London based. Most large provincial coaching centres contained contractors of substantial means. In 1792 one of the largest was F. Fromont of the King's Head, Thatcham who was horsing the London to Exeter mail the full 91 miles from Colnbrook to Bath and together with two partners was also horsing the mail from Bath to Bridgewater (40 miles) and the London to Bristol mail from Colnbrook to Thatcham (36 miles). John Crouse of Norwich operated 69 miles of route in East Anglia and was a partner with John Roberts, the London contractor, in the operation of 52 more. Contractors horsing more than 50 miles of mail-coach route were 7.3% of the total in 1792 but operating 28.9% of the route milage. The situation was very similar in 1836 when such contractors represented 8.2% of the total but operated nearly a third of the network. At provincial level T. Waddell of Birmingham was one of the largest mail-coach contractors in 1836 horsing 102 miles of route and in partnership horsing a further 108½ miles. William Lane of Bath with 68½ miles and a further 74½ in partnership, and John Cockram of Exeter with 86½ miles and 50 in partnership were substantial contractors in the West Country. Benjamin Brotherton of Liverpool who was operating 76¾ miles and 54¾ miles in partnership was said to keep 400 horses, but was considered smaller than two other Liverpool horsing contractors. Partnerships were frequent even when the operation was on a small scale. Some contractors operating less than ten miles

1. See table 51 p 263

Table 51 - Distances horsed by mail-coach contractors - England and Wales

	1792					1836				
	Distance conveyed					Distance conveyed				
	less than 10 miles	10–20 miles	20–50 miles	50–100 miles	over 100 miles	less than 10 miles	10–20 miles	20–50 miles	50–100 miles	over 100 miles
Number of contractors	23	82	33	9	2	97	125	80	21	6
% of the total number of contractors	15.4%	55%	22.1%	6%	1.3%	29.5%	38%	24.3%	6.4%	1.8%
% of route mileage horsed	5.8%	35.6%	29.7%	19.4%	9.5%	10.4%	23.4%	33.2%	17.9%	15.1%
Average length horsed per contractor			21.7 miles			Average length horsed per contractor				22.8 miles
Source: GL Gr 6.3.2.						Source: BPP 1837(70) XXIV part I 263 Appendix 28 pp 54–64				

of route were in partnership. Such partnerships must have been fairly loose and organised for the specific purpose of providing horses over a particular part of the coach route. The same contractor could be found operating within several different coaching companies for different routes or stages.[1] The pattern reflected in this analysis of mail-coach contracts was probably one common to the industry as a whole. Data for stage-coaches is less easy to obtain, but an analysis of information obtained from time bills for the Manchester Telegraph, Exeter Telegraph and Shrewsbury Wonder coaches, all operated by Edward Sherman shows a similar pattern. Sherman was responsible for the first stages from London on each route and then a succession of provincial partners took over, some horsing as little as 6½ miles, others being responsible for as much as 47½ miles but with an average for the 509 miles of route of 18.2 miles.[2]

In Scotland the pattern of coaching was similar to that in England and Wales.[3] Coach routes centred on Edinburgh in the east and Glasgow in the west where the major mail-coach contractors were established. When mail-coaches first reached the Scottish capital in 1786 William Drysdale & Sons were the horsing contractors who brought the coach into the city. They operated from the Turf Coffee House, St Andrew's Square. By 1810 however the base of operations had been changed to the Black Bull, Catherine Street and the coaches were horsed until the late 1820s by John Piper and then taken over by Edward Piper. By 1830 an additional office had been opened at 10, Prince's Street, and Edward Piper had a virtual monopoly of the horsing of the mail-coaches on the first stage from the city. He was horsing six mail-coaches in 1836 a total of 67 miles. Piper's major rival as a

1. See table 51 p263
2. BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 38 p72, Appendix 39 p73, Appendix 40 p74
3. See table 52 p265

Table 52 - Distances horsed by Scottish mail-coach contractors

	1792 Distances conveyed					1836 Distances conveyed				
	less than 10 miles	10-20 miles	20-50 miles	50-100 miles	over 100 miles	less than 10 miles	10-20 miles	20-50 miles	50-100 miles	over 100 miles
Number of contractors	1	14	4	1	-	19	27	16	2	-
% of total number of contractors	5%	70%	20%	5%	-	29.7%	42.2%	25%	3.1%	-
% of route mileage horsed	1.7%	53.2%	31.3%	13.8%	-	12.6%	31.9%	44.5%	11%	-
Average length horsed per contractor 19 miles						Average length horsed per contractor 18.45 miles				
Source: GL 6.3.2.						Source: BPP 1837(70) XXIV part I 263 Appendix 28 pp 65-66				

coaching contractor was John Croall, who operated amongst other routes, stage-coaches from Edinburgh to London, Manchester and Dublin and also maintained the largest coachbuilding establishment in Scotland. Croall became one of the contractors for the building and leasing of mail-coaches from 1836[1], but appears to have played only a minor role in the horsing of mail-coaches. At Glasgow mail-coach horsing appears by the mid 1830s to have been in the hands of a number of contractors of which the partnership of Bryne & Paton who operated 75¾ miles of the Glasgow to Carlisle route and Bain, Burn & Paton who horsed 54 miles of the routes to Edinburgh and Perth were the largest. Paton and Burn were also partners in the horsing of the Glasgow to Port Patrick mail for 14 miles.[2]

Both mail and stage coaches in England, Wales and Scotland were operated by companies of contractors who would be innkeepers in a substantial way of business, each furnishing horses for one or two stages (about 10-20 miles) but dominated by the contractors at the terminal points, especially those in London, who nominally operated the service and booked the majority of the passengers. This system of operating as part of a coaching company effectively spread the risks of the larger coaching entrepreneurs working several routes. In Ireland however a pattern for horsing coaches different from that of the remainder of the British Isles was adopted.[3] Innkeepers in Ireland were in a small way of business in most cases and unable to provide the capital necessary to operate coach services in an adequate and regular manner. Attempts by the Post Office to build up companies of innkeepers on the English pattern

1. See pp 240-43, 246

2. BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 p283; Denovan & Co's Edinburgh and Leith Directory (Edinburgh 1804); The Post Office Annual Directory (Edinburgh 1810); The Edinburgh Almanack (Edinburgh 1825,1830); Leslie Gardiner, Stage Coach to John O' Groats (1961) pp 85,139, 141,149-50

3. See table 53 p 267

Table 53 - Distances horsed by Irish mail-coach contractors

	1820						1836					
	Distance conveyed						Distance conveyed					
	less than 10 miles	10-20 miles	20-50 miles	50-100 miles	100-200 miles	Above 200 miles	less than 10 miles	10-20 miles	20-50 miles	50-100 miles	100-200 miles	Above 200 miles
Number of contractors	1	-	1	4	5	3	-	2	6	7	8	2
% of total number of contractors	7.1%	-	7.1%	28.6%	35.7%	21.4%	-	8%	24%	28%	32%	8%
% of route mileage horsed	0.5%	-	2%	18%	34.1%	45.4%	-	0.9%	6.2%	19.8%	41.7%	31.3%
Average length horsed per contractor	123.7 miles						Average length horsed per contractor 104.1 miles					
Source: BPP 1822(41) VII Appendix 1 pp 84, 86							Source: BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 29 pp 67-68					

Note: Distances are expressed in English statute miles

were tried and universally failed. Coaching in Ireland was in the hands of a small number of major contractors who had the resources to undertake the operation of complete routes and it was with these that the Post Office was of necessity obliged to contract, even though their near monopoly position forced up the rate that the Post Office had to pay. In 1820 the average length of route horsed by each contractor was nearly 124 miles with John Anderson operating 320 miles, Richard Bourne 262 miles and his brother William Bourne 205 miles. Richard Bourne ten years later was operating 213 miles and at that time owned 700 to 800 horses and even produced the hay and oats required as feed on his own farms. Contractors operating less than 50 miles barely existed. Peter Purcell in 1820 was only operating the Dublin to Waterford service (102 miles) but ten years later was beginning to dominate the Irish coaching scene. By 1836 he was horsing five mail-coaches with a total distance of 269½ miles and in partnership was operating a further six services amounting to 545½ miles. These combined represented 31.3% of the entire Irish mail-coach network. Both Bourne and Purcell had their own chains of stables, and provided their own coaches.[1] Charles Bianconi who horsed some mail-coaches in addition to his passenger cars, many of which carried mails, maintained an equally large scale enterprise. In 1832, the year in which he first officially contracted to carry mails, he owned 300 horses. Two years later he was reported to have 500-600 and upwards of 200 vehicles, while at the height of his road transit business in 1848 1,400 horses were operating a network of 3,800 miles.[2]

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 25-26; 1822(41) VI 1 Appendix 1 pp 84, 86; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 pp 27, 287-88; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 29 pp 67-68

2. BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p158; 1857(2195) IV 293 p61; Henry D Inglis, A Journey Throughout Ireland during ... 1834 (5th edn 1838) pp 31-32

Most of the large mail and stage-coach operators had established family connections with innkeeping and coaching and often father was succeeded by son in the trade. It was not impossible, though rare, to work through the trade from a relatively humble start to prosperity. John Willan, who became owner of the Bull and Mouth and one of the earliest mail-coach proprietors, was in 1745 an ostler at the Red Lion, Barnet when his talent for selecting horses was recognised by the Duke of Cumberland. Most however already had established capital from family enterprise. One notable outsider was Edward Sherman, who with the aid of capital provided by a former partner, Louis Levy[1], a farmer of turnpike tolls and post horse duties, moved from a career connected with the Stock Exchange. In Ireland, where the coaching tradition was weaker, outsiders appear more frequently. John Anderson of Cork and William Bourne of Dublin, pioneers in the establishment of mail-coaches in that island, were described as a merchant and a gentleman respectively. Even the Irish aristocracy contracted to operate mail-coaches, the Marquis of Sligo and Lord Northland being examples. Charles Bianconi had prospered as a gilder and mirror and print seller before he entered the field of road transport.[2] Occasionally coach operation was combined with a trade other than that of innkeeping. Instances have already been given of Croall, Purcell, Bourne and Bianconi operating in the coachbuilding field, a trade closely connected, though such a combination was far from common. In the 1790s a number of small provincial contractors were also postmasters, maintaining a traditional link between those who carried the mails and those who collected and distributed them at local level. The two trades were already at this date being separated from one another however, and as early as 1792 the Post Office had

1. Louis Levy (1786-1856) claimed by the mid 1820s to be renting three quarters of the tolls in London amounting in total to £400,000 to £500,000 per annum. At his death in 1856 his estate was valued for probate at £250,000.

2. BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p287; 1837(484) XX 397; WCL Foster Collection relating to London inns Vol 12 p245; Bagwell op cit p51; Hart op cit p14; M. O'C Bianconi & S.J. Watson, Bianconi - King of the Irish Roads (Dublin 1962) pp 39-41

declared itself against the maintenance of Post Offices at inns on grounds of security. Occasionally the trades of carrier and coach contractor were combined and in 1795 Pickfords were horsing the Macclesfield to Manchester section of the London to Manchester mail coach.[1]

The demands of coaching contractors represented a not inconsiderable element in the market for horses, which grew substantially in size in the early nineteenth century. Mail-coaches, because of the higher speeds at which they operated, and the insistance on accurate timekeeping, initially required a larger number of horses than stage-coaches over an equal distance, but the difference was largely eliminated by the mid 1820s with the development of fast day stage-coaches. The number of horses required would vary with the surface condition and the gradient of the road, but improvements in road construction and engineering especially from about 1815 would have reduced this variation considerably. By the 1820s coach contractors were generally agreed that a formula of a horse for each double mile of route was necessary to maintain fast services, though in areas like the north of England where good road building materials were more readily available, and the roads harder, a smaller number might suffice.[2] On this basis mail-coach operation in England and Wales would have required around 7,500 horses at its peak in the mid 1830s with the addition of around 1,250 for Scotland and 2,500 for Ireland. As mail-coaches probably represented only about 7.5% of all coaching in England, Wales and Scotland and about 25% of all coaching in Ireland at this period, the total effective horse population maintained for long distance coaching was probably about 120,000 for England, Wales and Scotland and 10,000 for Ireland.[3] This

1. POR Post 10/26/70, Post 10/26/124; Post 42/36/107

2. BPP 1829(161) XI 1 Appendix 82 p442; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 1 p10, Appendix 7 p43, Appendix 8 p45, Appendix 9 p46; Nimrod, The Road (new edn 1851) pp 30-31; Mountfield op cit p91

3. See table 25 p132, table 26 p 135, p145

estimate is not greatly at variance with previously published figures of around 150,000 horses employed in the 1830s on coaching traffic.[1] These figures assume the use of four horse coaches. The Post Office did however introduce a number of two horse coaches in the early 1820s and one was used as early as 1794 on the Carlisle to Port Patrick route. Their use does not however appear to have been expanded greatly until about 1835 after which they were increasingly used. By 1837 1,400 miles of route (18.5% of the total) was operated by two horse coaches in England and Wales, 486 miles (45.8%) in Scotland and 210 miles (8.2%) in Ireland. This would have reduced the demand for horses to some degree, though it is not clear whether such coaches required shorter stages and a more frequent change of horses. It is equally not clear to what extent the two horse coach was used by stage-coach proprietors on long distance traffic, though it is likely that it was uncommon until the late 1830s.[2]

To employ the formula of a horse a mile for earlier periods is less certain. Stage-coach travel was then less rapid, and the number of horses for a given distance smaller as changes were less frequent. Taking this into account it would seem likely that the number of horses required for long distance stage and mail-coach services in England, Wales and Scotland in 1810 was no more than around 50,000 and in Ireland 7,000. These calculations are difficult to equate with those for the horse population of Great Britain calculated by F.M.L. Thompson where for 1811 a figure of 100,000 is given for all stage carriage, post horse and other hackney use, but they are not obviously at variance. The total horse population in 1811 has been calculated by Thompson at slightly in excess of 1,275,000.[3]

1. Edwin A Pratt, A History of Inland Transport and Communication (1912) p325; Hugh Mc Causland, The English Carriage (1948) p23; Anthony Bird, Roads & Vehicles (1969) p126

2. BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 44 p266; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263, Appendix 23 pp 42-44; Edmund Vale, The Mail-Coach Men of the Late Eighteenth Century (1960) pp 88-89

3. F.M.L. Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense", EHR 2nd series Vol XXIX No 1 (February 1976) Appendix p80

From these data it is possible to estimate the effective market demand per annum for replacement horses for the long distance coach trade. By the 1830s horses on fast coaches were maintained in service for an average of three to four years. This rate of replacement had already been followed in mail-coaching for several decades and John Willan in 1811 stated that three years was the active life of a mail-coach horse but on a stage-coach five years might be expected. William Horne claimed that away from urban areas a longer life might be expected of coach horses because of lighter loads, better diet and more airy and healthy stables. He stated however that he found it necessary to buy 150 new horses each year to maintain a working stock of 400 which would suggest a working life of less than three years.[1] This information would suggest an annual replacement need in 1810 of about 12,500 horses for England, Wales and Scotland and 1,750 for Ireland, rising to 40,000 and 3,300 respectively by 1835.[2] To these figures could be added an additional 10% which would be needed to increase stock to cover the expansion of services. Good coach horses by the late 1820s were costing around £35 in England and Wales but were cheaper in Ireland where they sold for £20 to £25.[3] Thus long distance coach traffic was generating an annual demand for horses worth by the 1830s around £1,540,00 in England, Wales and Scotland and £81,700 in Ireland. Of this aggregate demand, the mail-coach part of the business

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p34; 1819(509) V 339 pp 14-15; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 6 p39, Appendix 9 p46; Mountfield op cit p91

2. The reduction in the length of stages at which horses were changed, which occurred mainly in the 1820s in stage-coaching, may not have necessitated a great increase in horse stock. Harper suggests that coach horses during the day would now run a return journey on a stage of six to seven miles whereas previously a single stage of ten or eleven miles was all that was required (Vol II p176). Most coach proprietors however claimed that fast coaches were more expensive to horse than slow ones. This may have been the result of a shorter active working life for horses on fast coaches.

3. BPP 1831-32(716) XVIII 1 pp 159, 287; 1836(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 6 p39, Appendix 7 p43, Appendix 9 p 46; Mountfield op cit p91

accounted for about £115,500 in England, Wales and Scotland and £20,500 in Ireland. Some return could be expected by coach contractors on the sale of horses which after their period of coach service, though not agile enough for their former master's needs, were still fit enough for less strenuous duty as private carriage and van horses.[1]

The breeding of horses was widely carried on as a sideline to general farming. Certain areas did however develop a reputation for producing horses specially suited to a particular requirement. The Cleveland horse was regarded as particularly suitable for coach work and was bred well outside the geographical area suggested by its name. From the latter half of the eighteenth century the breed was considerably modified by crossing with hunters and thoroughbred stock to produce a less heavy and more spirited animal suited to the needs of the accelerated coach schedules being introduced. Cleveland horses were being extensively sold in London and also exported to Northern Europe. The reduction in fast coaching traffic following the establishment of the railway network reduced the demand for this breed. Horse fairs in areas with a reputation for breeding good coach stock would be frequented by buyers seeking animals of this type. William Chaplin bought extensively at Horncastle fair in Lincolnshire. He established a special horse buying and veterinary department to serve his needs which was placed under the direction of James Nunn. The coaching trade could also absorb horses found unsuitable in other situations. Animals that had proved vicious or unmanageable in the hands of private owners could be broken when working as part of a coach team, whilst racehorses found deficient in the field could also be applied to coach work. Spirit was a desirable quality in a coach horse. The difference in price of about £10 between coach horses in Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom may well have encouraged some trade across the Irish

1. Harper op cit Vol II p174

Sea and certainly such a trade existed at the end of the nineteenth century. It does not however appear to have been commented upon early in the century.[1]

Apart from the benefit received by farmers from the sale of coach horses there was also profit to be made from the provision of fodder. A coach horse would consume about 2.1 tons of oats a year and 2.9 tons of hay[2] and would require 1.3 tons of straw for bedding. This would suggest that the national consumption by long distance stage and mail-coach horses for feed and bedding would have been approximately as shown in table 54 below

Table 54 - Approximate figures of the consumption of feed and bedding of long distance coach horses

Date	Total aggregate consumption per annum England, Wales and Scotland	Ireland
1810		
Oats	105,000 tons	14,700 tons
Hay	145,000 tons	20,300 tons
Straw	65,000 tons	9,100 tons
1835		
Oats	252,000 tons	21,000 tons
Hay	348,000 tons	29,000 tons
Straw	156,000 tons	13,000 tons

1. John Walker Ord, The History and Antiquities of Cleveland (1846), pp 97-99; Robert Wallace, Farm Live Stock of Great Britain (5th edn 1923) p495; Thompson op cit p78; Harper op cit Vol II pp 177, 204; R.C. & J.M. Anderson, Quicksilver - A Hundred Years of Coaching 1750-1850 (Newton Abbot 1973) p128

2. The figures given here are something of a compromise. Thompson op cit p78 on the basis of U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics for the period 1910-31 lists the consumption of a town horse as 1.4 tons of oats and 2.4 tons of hay. M.J. Freeman, "The stage-coach system of South Hampshire", Journal of Historical Geography 1 (1975) p 280 suggests a requirement for coach horses of 2.4 tons of oats and 3.75 tons of hay per annum, while Bianconi & Watson op cit p61 list the feed for Irish car and coach horses owned by Charles Bianconi as 2.4 tons of oats, 2.6 tons of hay with 1.3 tons of straw as bedding.

A contractor in Eastern Scotland in 1835 claimed that it cost 2/- a day to feed a coach horse, and this figure accords reasonably well with the published costs a year or so earlier for operating the London to York "Highflyer" stage-coach where horses were claimed to cost 17-10d a week to feed at a time when it was claimed that oats cost 30/- a quarter and hay £5 a load. This might suggest an average annual cost of food consumed by long distance coach horses in the 1830s of about £4,368,000 per annum in England, Wales and Scotland and £364,000 in Ireland,[1] though costs would vary from place to place and from month to month depending on market prices. It was always dearer to feed horses in a town than in a country area and this particularly applied to horses which had to be kept in central London. Horse fodder was said to be cheaper in Ireland in 1829 than in the remainder of the United Kingdom, though in 1836 only hay was said to be lower in price, and two years later feed costs were declared to be as expensive as in the rest of the country. The high cost of feed in certain years during the Napoleonic Wars made the operation of mail-coaches unprofitable, and in 1799 the allowance given by the Post Office to the contractors had to be doubled from 1d to 2d a mile.[2] Throughout the war period the rate was subject to considerable variation depending on feed prices.[3]

Apart from the widely diffused and substantial benefit derived by farmers and landowners in respect of the supply of coach horses and their feed, the demands of the coaching trade had many additional ramifications. The supply and repair of harness gave widespread employment and stimulated the demand for leather, tools, needles and thread and the products of

1. POR Post 10/137; Thomas A. Croal, A Book About Travelling (1877) p203. The figure of 30/- a quarter for oats seems appreciably higher than that quoted by B.R. Mitchell & P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics(1962) pp 486-87 for the south of England. The 14/- figure has therefore been used in calculating figures of aggregate cost.

2. BPP 1829(353) XII 1 p64; 1837(70) XXXIV part 1 263 Appendix 56 p103; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 p289; Herbert Joyce, The History of the Post Office from its Establishment down to 1836 (1893) p326

3. The price of oats in the period 1799 to 1819 averaged 30/3d a quarter compared with 22/1d a quarter for the period 1820 to 1841 i.e. it was 27% higher. Mitchell & Deane op cit pp 486-87.

trades manufacturing small metal goods. In 1821 new sets of coach harness were costing £6 a horse while additional costs caused by wear and tear in service were high. Blacksmiths' bills were frequently incurred. It cost £2 a year per horse for shoeing and in addition the horse needed to be stabled at an additional cost of 10/- per horse per year. On top of this were the wages of ostlers, book-keepers and servants and the rent of carriage houses to be met. William Chaplin claimed to be employing by the late 1830s 2,000 men at a time when he was using 1,800 horses in his enterprise. This might suggest that long distance coaching was responsible at this period for the direct employment of around 140,000 persons either full or part time. In aggregate coaching represented a very substantial investment, and was a large employer because of its labour intensive nature.[1]

The number of passengers permitted to travel on a mail-coach was rigidly controlled by the Post Office in the interests of speed and security. When mail-coaches were first introduced on the London to Bristol route in 1784 four inside passengers were carried and this was to continue as the standard inside loading. Early mail-coaches were however only permitted to carry one outside passenger as it was feared that to carry more might provide opportunities to tamper with the mails and would obstruct the guard's line of fire should an attempt be made at robbery. When operating costs rose during the Napoleonic Wars caused by high animal feed prices and general inflation, some relaxation in the number of outside passengers carried seems to have been accepted.[2] This is reflected in the modified mail-coaches introduced in 1803[3] which were capable of carrying two or three outside passengers. By 1809 the Post Office appear to have been permitting four or more outside passengers,

1. BPP 1822(454) XVIII 173; Croal op cit p203; Harper op cit Vol II p204

2. POR Post 10/5/38; Gentleman's Magazine Vol LIV pt II (Sept 1784) p646

3. See pp 222-23

and a year later four outside passengers were permitted on 1,600 miles of route and in excess of this number on another 200 miles. On the less remunerative routes extra passengers were allowed as an alternative to paying a higher rate for the conveyance of the mail. By 1814 the Post Office was grading its mail-coaches into four classes depending on the type of vehicle used, the importance of the route and the number of passengers carried. The first two classes were patent mail-coaches, the first being permitted two outside passengers and covering 23 of the main routes including virtually all those from London. Four outside passengers were permitted on second class mail-coaches which covered 29 main cross and branch routes. The two remaining classes operated by stage-coaches were confined to less important cross and branch routes. In the third class most were restricted to four outside passengers, though ten out of the 23 routes were permitted to carry the full limit allowed by law. The fourth class consisted of nine stage-coach routes operating short distances where no Post Office restriction on the number of passengers applied.[1] As competition from fast day coaches increased and mail-coaches became less remunerative, the Post Office restriction on the number of passengers was relaxed (see table 55 p287). This is particularly noticeable in the 1841 figures with the commencement of the breakdown of the main trunk mail-coach network in the face of railway competition, and the increasing use of stage-coaches because of the difficulty in finding contractors willing to undertake mail-coach duties.
Loadings on public stage-coaches before 1788 were unregulated and excessive weights of passengers and goods could lead to accidents. In 1770 the London to Hertford coach was conveying 34 passengers with luggage when one of the main braces failed killing one passenger and maiming two others. An act was passed in 1788 restricting the number of outside passengers to eight and this was further reduced in 1790 to five. This act was found difficult to enforce and in 1806 the limit

1. POR Post 30/8474K/1814; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p10

Table 55 - Number of outside passengers permitted to travel on mail-coaches in England, Scotland and Wales

Year	number of outside passengers														
	3	%	4	%	5	%	6	%	7	%	8	%	9	%	total number of routes
1835	22	18.5%	94	79%	-	-	1	0.8%	-	-	2	1.7%	-	-	119
1841	7	5.8%	67	55.8%	7	5.8%	2	1.7%	1	0.8%	35	29.2%	1	0.8%	120

Sources: BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372

was raised to 12 outside in summer and ten in winter which was to include the guard. In 1811 ten was specified as the maximum throughout the year. Coaches drawn by two or three horses were restricted to five outside passengers exclusive of the guard.[1] It is thus clear that the loading permitted on mail-coaches was in general significantly lower than that permitted on stage-coaches. Until the mid 1820s mail-coaches because of their speed and regularity could attract custom in sufficient volume at premium fares[2] to make them profitable with this restricted loading. By the late 1830s fierce competition made it necessary to ensure that virtually every passenger presenting themselves could be accommodated, hence the heavier permitted loadings, though these were even then seldom up to the limit permitted by the law. (see table 56 p280).

In Ireland up to 1831, when the Post Office was joined with that of the rest of the United Kingdom, contractors provided their own coaches some of which could accommodate six inside passengers. The passenger loading permitted was laid down in the contract and in most cases was not in excess of that in mainland Britain. Four inside and one outside was the normal permitted loading and this was specified in 14 of the 27 contracts signed between 1800 and 1818. Only in four cases were more than six passengers allowed, the maximum being ten. In 1820 14 out of the 21 routes operated carried a limit of seven passengers or less, and ten was the maximum. At first sight these loadings seem in line with those of the rest of the United Kingdom and in some cases lighter but Charles Johnson, the Mail-coach Superintendent, in

1. The Annual Register for 1770(1771) p145; Harper op cit vol I pp 206-10; Bird op cit pp 110-11
2. For information regarding coach fares see pp 294-95

Table 56 - Permitted passenger loadings on mail-coaches and stage-coaches conveying mails in England, Scotland and Wales 1814-41

Date	Number of routes	Number of routes for which specified number of passengers carried.								Average number of passengers authorised per coach	Limit permitted by law on public coaches
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
1814	83	23	-	41	-	-	-	-	19	8.6	13
1835	119	-	22	94	-	1	-	2	-	7.9	13
1841	120	-	7	67	7	2	1	35	1	9.3	13

Sources: POR Post 30/E474K/1814
BPP 1836(364) XLV 449
BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

1832 reported that although four outside passengers was the usually specified load in Ireland at that date, there were many cases where special licences had been issued to allow six or eight outside passengers over part of the route. By 1836 however all Irish mail-coaches had adopted the four inside and four outside loading with the exception of two services where ten outside passengers were permitted and one where the legal limit was allowed.[1]

In any attempt to calculate the amount of passenger traffic conveyed by mail and stage-coaches it is important to be able to estimate the actual loading achieved, which was clearly less than the loading permitted by contract or statute. There is reason for thinking that initially at least, mail-coaches were well patronised. In June 1791 it was stated that the public preferred mail-coaches, which were conveying on average "one inside passenger in four more than the Post coaches", while the London to Poole mail-coach was achieving an 80% loading during the winter of 1790/91.[2] The low permitted loading of mail-coaches at this period consisting of four inside and one outside passenger, coupled with their obvious superiority in speed, regularity and security often ensured loadings near to capacity. The winter loading on the Poole coach may not have been typical however for Palmer in 1791 claimed that there was little travelling in night coaches at that season and mail-coaches would probably be running at a temporary loss during the winter months. Outside passengers were particularly vulnerable in the winter, and as the extra passenger capacity added to mail-coaches from 1803 was of this type, lower percentage loadings might be expected at later dates. Stiffer opposition from stage-coaches was to develop and by 1810 light post coaches were syphoning off traffic. Data regarding mail-coach loadings are not easy to locate, but information obtained from a number of used coach time bills for the period 1823 to 1840

1. BPP 1818(425) XVI 443 pp 444-55; 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix pp 84-86; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p80; 1836(364) XLV 457 p4
2. Freeman op cit p275

is recorded in table 58 pages 283-84. This selection embraces 26 journeys covering a range of long and medium distance routes, some main routes from London, some provincial cross routes and some Scottish and Irish services. The range is not ideal, for there is a majority of winter journeys where the loading might be expected to be lower, and Scottish services are rather more strongly represented than their percentage of route network would in fairness dictate. The table does however point out certain facts. Overall loadings were far from the capacity of the coaches. Even if the summer services are calculated separately only 56.7% of the available inside accommodation was taken and 49.2% of the outside accommodation. The dislike of winter travelling on the outside of the coach is illustrated, though there are exceptions. The most obvious lesson to be drawn from the table is the unpredictable nature of passenger loadings especially in winter. A Parliamentary return of the loading of Irish mail-coaches for the year 1835 shows an average of 4.1 passengers per coach or an overall loading of 51.25% of capacity (table 57 below)

Table 57 - Average passenger loadings on Irish mail-coaches 1835[1]

	average number of passengers carried				
Number of routes or sections of routes claiming this average	6	5	4	3	2
	1	16	23	11	4

maximum loading - 8 passengers

average number of passengers carried 4.1 (51.25% of maximum loading)

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1. excludes the Dublin to Belfast day mail which was in effect a stage-coach with a maximum passenger loading of 16. An average load of eleven passengers (68.75%) was claimed for this coach.

Source: BPP 1837-38(145) XXXV 469 Appendix B No 4 pp 33-44

It is difficult to be certain what represents a paying load, for this would vary from route to route, but clearly a number of the journeys shown must have operated at a considerable loss. Data for the loading of stage-coaches are equally difficult to locate. Freeman lists information on loadings at Andover of a London to Salisbury stage-coach from 11-29 January 1836 which averaged about six passengers a journey compared with

Table 58 - Passenger loadings of mail-coaches 1823-1840

Date	Route	Distance	Maximum loading[1] In	Maximum loading[1] Out	Achieved loading[1] In	Achieved loading[1] Out	Percentage loading In	Percentage loading Out	Source
23 Mar 1823	Portsmouth - Bristol	99	396	396	212	249	53.5%	62.9%	POR Post 10/17
17 Mar 1828	London - Portsmouth	74	296	222	74	37	25%	16.7%	POR Transport 18
18 Mar 1828	Portsmouth - London	74	296	222	74	-	25%	-	Ibid
1 Jan 1829	London - Edinburgh	397	1588	1191	505	-	31.8%	-	BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 12-14 pp 110-126
1 Jan 1829	London - Carlisle via Leeds	311	1244	933	928	69	99.5%	7.4%	Ibid
3 Jan 1829	Edinburgh - Aberdeen	132	528	528	119	-	22.5%	-	Ibid
3 Jan 1829	London - Carlisle via Leeds	311	1244	933	631	215	50.7%	23%	Ibid
4 Jan 1829	Aberdeen - Inverness via Banff	123	492	492	170	266	34.6%	54.1%	Ibid
5 Jan 1829	Inverness - Thurso	159	636	636	-	34	-	5.3%	Ibid
5 Jan 1829	Carlisle - Glasgow	95	380	380	380	106	100%	27.9%	Ibid
25 Sept 1829	London - Birmingham	119	476	476	136	75	28.6%	15.8%	POR Post 10/7
26 Sept 1829	Birmingham - London	119	476	476	242	340	50.8%	71.4%	Ibid
1 Jan 1830	London - Edinburgh	397	1588	1191	695	48	43.8%	4%	BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 12-14 pp 110-126
3 Jan 1830	Carlisle - Glasgow	95	380	380	-	301	-	79.2%	Ibid
4 Jan 1830	Aberdeen - Inverness via Huntley	108	432	432	328	152	75.9%	35.2%	Ibid
4 Jan 1830	Aberdeen - Banff	47	188	188	39	145	20.7%	77.1%	Ibid
5 Jan 1830	Banff - Aberdeen	47	188	188	-	168	-	89.4%	Ibid
5 Jan 1830	Inverness - Thurso	159	636	636	200	21	31.4%	3.3%	Ibid

Date	Route	Distance	Maximum loading[1] In	Maximum loading[1] Out	Achieved loading[1] In	Achieved loading[1] Out	Percentage loading In	Percentage loading Out	Source
21 Mar 1836	Dublin - Limerick	119	476	476	432	432	90.6%	90.6%	POR Post 10/19
22 Mar 1836	Limerick - Dublin	119	476	476	238	-	50%	-	Ibid
2 Aug 1836	Londonderry - Sligo	86	344	344	83	83	24.1%	24.1%	Ibid
4 Aug 1836	Sligo - Londonderry	86	344	344	166	151	48.3%	43.9%	Ibid
29 Oct 1836	London - Liverpool	207	828	621	772	463	93.2%	74.6%	POR Post 10/7
18 Feb 1837	London - Edinburgh	397	1588	1191	434	87	27.3%	7.3%	Ibid
3 Nov 1840	Manchester - York	70	280	280	-	93	-	33.2%	Ibid
4 Dec 1840	York - Manchester	70	280	280	91	70	32.5%	25%	Ibid
			16080	13912	6949	3605	43.2%	25.9%	

1. Loadings are expressed in passenger miles i.e. number of passengers X the distance travelled.

The maximum permitted loading on all mail coaches listed was 4 inside and 4 outside with the following exceptions which were 4 inside and 3 outside:

London - Edinburgh
London - Carlisle
London - Portsmouth
London - Liverpool

the licensed capacity of 15[1] (40%), and also data from surveys at Basingstoke, Farnborough and Kingston-upon-Thames of the loading of coaches in November and December 1833 which indicate averages of 5.6, 4.3 and 6.1 passengers per coach respectively which would represent loadings in the range 30-45%. The Kingston figures suggest that loadings in the immediate vicinity of London were higher and this is bourne out by the figures for coaches passing through the Shenfield gate on 26 February 1838 which indicate a loading of 8.6 passengers per coach or around 60% loading. Freeman has carried out an analysis of the number of passengers carried on coaches that were involved in accidents in South Hampshire from newspaper accounts. These show somewhat higher loadings. Winter loadings for the period 1772-99 were 6.7 passengers, 1800-20 were 9.7 passengers and 1821-39 were 6.4 passengers. Summer loadings were significantly higher at 13.3, 14 and 10.5 respectively. Overloading and mechanical failure consequent upon it were factors in some accidents, and the figures may therefore not be altogether typical.[2]

The data assembled can be used to tentatively suggest the volume of passenger traffic carried by the coaching system. The timebills listed in table 58 pp283-84 can be used to establish the minimum number of passenger journeys for each of the services, which may then be averaged. In England, Wales and Scotland this was 6.2 passengers per journey and in Ireland 4.8 passengers, though here the small number of entries must make any calculation from this data alone suspect. There were 132 mail-coach routes operating in England and Wales in 1836[3], and these operated seven days a week. This would suggest a minimum passenger flow of nearly 600,000 passenger journeys per annum. On the

1. In 1830 60.7% of all stage-coaches operating from London were licensed to convey 4 inside and 11 outside passengers and 31.6% to convey 4 inside and 8 outside passengers (Robson's London Directory for 1830).

2. Freeman op cit pp 274-76; John Copeland, Roads and their Traffic 1750-1850 (Newton Abbot 1968) pp 89-91

3. ~~BPP~~ 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 pp 42-44

basis that mail-coach routes represented about 7.5%[1] of all long distance coaching services, a minimum passenger movement of nearly 8 million public coach journeys per annum for England, Wales and Scotland would be suggested. But as permitted loading capacity was higher on stage-coaches and it might be reasonable to assume that the number of passengers per journey would be higher, a minimum figure of 10 million passenger journeys might therefore seem likely.[2] These are minimum figures, and may well represent an error of as much as 25% in respect of the passenger loading per journey, as it is impossible to identify all passenger changes when only figures for the total passenger loadings at each stage are given. If an equal number of passengers were dropped and picked up at a stage this would not be identifiable from the figures. In the case of Ireland figures for the number of passengers carried by mail-coach exist for the years 1834 and 1835. The total number of passenger journeys undertaken in 1834 was 77,422 and in 1835 82,191.[3] In 1835 the network operated by Irish mail-coaches was 2,682 miles compared with 9,232 miles for the rest of the United Kingdom. Using these figures and the figures on p285 showing a loading of 4.8 passengers per journey in Ireland, compared with 6.2 passengers for the remainder of the United Kingdom, a passenger flow of just under 450,000 passenger journeys per annum is arrived at for all United Kingdom mail-coaches, or about 23% less than suggested by the estimates listed earlier in this paragraph. The limited data available makes it uncertain which of these two estimates is preferable. Calculations can also be made on the basis of passenger miles. By the 1820s eight passengers appear to have been a common permitted load on mail-coaches and an average loading of around 45% of the

1. See p145

2. Philip Bagwell estimates that there were over 10 million individual coach journeys per annum in the mid 1830s, "assuming an average of eight passengers per trip ... and 2,500 trips per week", though quite how the figures and totals are arrived at is not explained (The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p43).

3. BPP 1837-38(145) XXXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45

maximum is suggested from the data available covering the 1820s and 30s.[1] Calculations on this basis and the route network contained in table 25 p132 and table 26 p135 are shown in table 59 below

Table 59 - Estimated passenger mileage operated by mail-coaches in the United Kingdom 1820-35

	passenger miles operated per annum			
	1820	1825	1830	1835
England & Wales	17,229,000	17,728,000	16,940,000	20,764,000
Scotland	3,077,000	3,519,000	3,351,000	3,238,000
Ireland	5,156,000	5,514,000	5,550,000	7,048,000
Total for the United Kingdom	25,462,000	26,761,000	25,841,000	31,050,000

Given that mail-coaches represented about 7.5% of all public long-distance coaches in the mid 1830s and that stage-coaches had aproximately 50% more passenger seats available than mail-coaches, the passenger flow for all public long distance coaches at this period must have been aproximately 605,475,000 passenger miles per annum.

The restricted loading allowed on mail-coaches worked against the interests of those proprietors who operated them, as at times passengers might have to be refused. They did however enjoy a subsidy in the amount paid by the Post Office for transmitting the mails, the guard provided free of charge to them and probably the greatest advantage of all, the coaches operated free of turnpike toll. Even in Ireland and Scotland where toll applied at certain periods, the Post Office made itself responsible for the payment.[2] The advantage given to mail-coach proprietors naturally varied from route to route depending on the number of tolls that had to be paid and their individual cost. In total the remission was however considerable. In 1812 it was estimated to be £11,299-6-8d in Scotland and £38,760-6-1d in England and Wales. The route network at this date was 1232 miles in Scotland and 6539 miles in England and Wales, so that this would suggest

1. See pp 276-78, 281-84
2. See pp 136-38

an advantage to the contractor of 3.5d per mile travelled in Scotland and 2.3d in England and Wales. In 1830 the Post Office were claiming that the need to pay tolls in Scotland was costing them £15,700 at a time when the route network inside Scotland was 1275 miles which equals 4.7 d per mile travelled. Chaplin in December 1827 declared that tolls on stage-coaches were costing him 12/- to 15/- per month per mile i.e. 4.8d to 6d daily for each mile operated, but he was probably referring to a double mile (a mile of operation in each direction). William Waterhouse in 1819 claimed that he was paying 3½d a mile in tolls.[1] There are some difficulties in equating these sums in terms of passenger fares as these were subject to fluctuation. Outside fares on mail-coaches appear to have been around 2½d a mile and assuming a likely loading of around 50%, the advantage of freedom from tolls would appear to equate with the availability of two outside seats. This would help to bridge the gap between the three or four outside passengers allowed on a mail-coach and the eight or eleven usual on stage-coaches.[2] Proprietors of stage-coaches certainly realised the great advantage of toll remission and overtures were frequently made to the Post Office to carry mails free of charge in stage-coaches for the exemption from toll. The Post Office were however aware of the hostility of turnpike trustees to such arrangements, especially in the late 1830s when their income was threatened by imminent railway development, and by this period were refusing toll remission in new arrangements for the carriage of mail on stage-coaches. The Post Office however realised that the volume of mail transmitted by stage-coach might in the short run have to increase as main mail-coach routes were eliminated by railway competition.[3]

1. POR Post 1/24/225; BPP 1819(509) V 339 p13; 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 42 p254; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 7 p44

2. W.T. Jackman, The Development of Transport in Modern England (3rd edn 1966) pp 344-45

3. BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 p9; 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 2-3

The expenses of operating both mail and stage-coaches were for accountancy purposes divided into two groups. The company of partners operating the route would collectively account for all receipts and the expenses of coach hire, government duties, operating staff and booking and accountancy costs. Individual partners were however responsible for their own costs in horsing the coach. Of all the costs that had to be met by a mail-coach company collectively the highest was the government duty and taxes which rose steeply in the early years of the Napoleonic Wars to a level where they accounted on average for between 60% and 70% of its entire expenditure (see table 60 pp290-91). All mail and stage-coaches were subject to mileage duty. This was first introduced in 1779 when it consisted of a licence fee of 5/- and a ½d for each mile the coach operated. The rate was raised to 1d in 1783 and 2d in 1797. A new system of assessment was introduced in 1804, the rate charged reflecting not only the distance covered but the number of passengers that the coach was authorised to carry. The top rate of 5½d a mile applied to coaches with over ten seats. These high wartime rates continued until 1822 when a slight reduction was made but it was not until 1842 that the rate was drastically reduced to 1½d a mile. The system adopted after 1804 could be disadvantageous to mail-coaches which might have to pay the same licence fee as a stage-coach whose passenger carrying capacity, not restricted by the Post Office, was higher. In 1836 for instance, the groupings used for licensing purposes forced most mail-coaches to pay duty for the group six to nine passengers though many coaches could only carry seven, giving stage-coaches a two passenger advantage. In addition to the mileage duty a stage-coach licence fee had to be paid for each vehicle, the rate being £9-9s in the war years falling in 1825 to £5-5s.[1] There were also assessed taxes to be paid on coachmen. Other company expenses were of a more minor nature. The costs of booking, keeping the company's accounts, advertising and stationery were usually in the range 10 to 20%, the

1. BPP 1830(686) XXV 226; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 57 p105; 1857(2199) LV 65 Appendix 24 pp liv-lv

Table 60 - Cost of operating mail and stage coaches 1802-39 (exclusive of horse and coach hire)

Route	Dates	Government duties and taxes	Turnpike tolls	Coachman's wages	Booking and accountancy fees, stationery & advertising	Grease, lamp oil straw	Miscellaneous expenses	Source
A. Mail-coaches								
Birmingham to Sheffield	25 Dec 1802 -22 Jan 1803	£61-14-4 (70.7%)	-	£8-8s (9.6%)	£12-5-6d (14.1%)	£1-3s (1.3%)	£3-15-3 (3.4%)	BC 546.43/ M3840
Birmingham to Sheffield	12 May to 9 June 1804	£70-2-4 (65.5%)	-	£8-8s (7.9%)	£13-14s (12.9%)	15s (0.7%)	£13-17s (13%)	BC 546.43/ M3907
Birmingham to Sheffield	3 to 30 Sept 1809	£111-15-1 (65.5%)	£10-18s (6.4%)	£10-10s (6.2%)	£32-1-6d (18.9%)	£2-18s (1.7%)	£2-3s (1.3%)	BC 546.43/ M3909
Birmingham to Sheffield	21 Dec 1811 -18 Jan 1812	£110-9-2 (66%)	£10-12s (6.3%)	£14-14s (8.8%)	£24-3-6d (14.5%)	£4-6s (2.6%)	£2-18-11 (1.8%)	BC 546.43/ M3910
Gloucester to Brighton	13 Aug 1836 -25 Mar 1837	£594-16s (70.1%)	-	£78-8s (9.2%)	£126-15-6 (14.9%)	£26-18s (3.2%)	£21-8s (2.5%)	POR Post 10/97
London to Brighton (day mail)	18 Aug to 15 Sept 1838	£27-10s (51.8%)	16s (1.5%)	£4-16s (9%)	£9-9s (17.8%)	-	£10-10s (19.8%)	BC 546.43/94
London to Bristol	1 to 28 Dec 1839	£83-0-4 (74.5%)	-	£19-4s (17.2%)	£2-18s (2.6%)	-	£6-4-4d (5.6%)	Harris op cit p204
B. Stage-coaches								
London to Gloucester and Hereford	8 Sept to 5 Oct 1806	£113-12-5 (45.3%)	£66-19-7 (26.7%)	-	£40-12-6 (16.2%)	£5-16-3 (2.3%)	£23-14-10 (9.5%)	Ibid pp 205-06

Route	Dates	Government duties and taxes	Turnpike tolls [1]	Coachman's wages	Booking and accountancy fees, stationery & advertising	Grease lamp oil & straw	Miscellaneous	Source
London to Bristol night coach (The Monarch)	15 to 28 June 1834	£62-13-3 (47.1%)	£32-9-8 (24.4%)	£32 (24%)	£1-1s (0.8%)	£1-16s (1.4%)	£3-3-4 (2.4%)	Harris op cit p200
London to Bedford	1 Jan 1803 -31 Dec 1806	£617-2-7 (45.5%)	£512-9-10 (37.7%)		£138-12s (10.2%)		£89-10-4 [2] (6.6%)	BRO DDX37/4

1. Mail-coaches only exceptionally paid turnpike tolls in England and Wales e.g. when not carrying mails or when passing over bridges or sections of road that were privately owned. Stage-coaches conveying mails were usually but not universally exempt.

2. Excluding expenses relative to the supply and repair of coaches as this coaching company owned their own vehicles contrary to the usual practice of hiring such vehicles.

coachman's wages swallowed another 7-9% and the balance was accounted for by the purchase of lamps and lamp oil, grease, straw and miscellaneous items. In a stage-coach company government duties took a smaller proportion of the expenses than with mail-coaches, amounting to about 45%, as turnpike tolls amounting to 25% had in addition to be considered.

These company accounts however leave out two items of expense, the provision of the coach and its horsing. In the case of mail-coaches the rate of coach hire in England, Wales and Scotland was fixed by agreements between the Post Office and the coachbuilders. This was 1¼d a mile to 1804, then 1⅜d a mile falling to 1½d in the postwar period.[1] For horsing no standard rate can be fixed, for costs would vary from year to year with the cost of purchasing feed and replacement horses. On the basis of calculations made earlier it would seem that in the 1830s the cost of a horse would be in the region of £30 and would last in service for 3 years. Its feed would average around 15/- a week and it would cost £2-10s to shoe and stable each year. This would suggest a charge of about 19/- per week for each horse[2] and a horse a mile would be required to maintain a fast coach. Calculations on this basis are shown in table 61 p293 for mail-coaches and show that the maintenance of the team of horses was by far the largest expense accounting for 60 to 70% of all costs. Government duty was the next largest imposition at around 10 to 20%, coach hire 5 to 6% and all remaining costs 8 to 10%. A petition drawn up in 1830 by Lancashire stage-coach proprietors showed that government duty and taxes accounted for 16.6%[3] of their total expenses, tolls amounted to 9.2% and the remaining 74.2% was attributable to other expenses of which the feeding and maintenance of the stock of horses was by far the largest.

1. See pp 232-33

2. William Lane, a mail-coach proprietor, declared in November 1825 that it cost £1-1s a week to keep a horse, but as he was testifying before a Parliamentary committe to the effect that he was operating mail-coaches at a loss, his figures may have been deliberately inflated (BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 1 p10).

3. If turnpike tolls are excluded to provide a basis for direct comparison with mail-coaches this figure would be 18.3%.

Table 61 - Expenses of operating mail-coaches inclusive of horsing and coach hire 1802-39

Route	Dates of operation	Mileage	Estimated cost of coach hire	Estimated cost of horsing	Government duty	Other costs	Total expenses
Birmingham to Sheffield	25 Dec 1802 to 22 Jan 1803	76	£26-12s (6.6%)	£288-16s (71.7%)	£61-14-4d (15.3%)	£25-11-9d (6.4%)	£402-14-1d
Birmingham to Sheffield	12 May to 9 June 1804	76	£26-12s (6.3%)	£288-16s (68.4%)	£70-2-4d (16.6%)	£36-14s (8.7%)	£422-4-4d
Birmingham to Sheffield	3 to 30 Sept 1809	76	£26-12s (5.2%)	£288-16s (59.8%)	£111-15-1d (23%)	£58-10-6d (12.1%)	£485-13-7d
Birmingham to Sheffield	21 Dec 1811 to 18 Jan 1812	76	£26-12s (5.5%)	£288-16s (59.8%)	£110-9-2d (22.9%)	£56-14-5d (11.6%)	£482-11-7d
Gloucester to Brighton	13 Aug 1836 to 25 Mar 1837	155	£372 (6.3%)	£4712 (79.4%)	£594-16s (10%)	£253-9-6d (4.3%)	£5932-5-6d
London to Brighton Day Mail	18 Aug to 15 Sept 1838	55	£16-10s (5.9%)	£209 (75%)	£27-10s (9.9%)	£25-11s (9.2%)	£278-11s
London to Bristol	1 to 28 Dec 1839	122	£36-12s (6%)	£463-12s (75.8%)	£83-0-4d (13.6%)	£28-6-4d (4.6%)	£611-10-8d

This emphasises the high percentage attributable to horse provision as indicated also in the pattern for mail-coaches shown in table 61.[1]

Passenger fare receipts constituted the main source of income for both mail and stage-coach operators and the former were able to charge premium rates. As the number of outside passengers on a mail-coach was restricted in the interests of speed and regularity, it was regarded as a more exclusive form of travel, and a high degree of security was offered by the presence of the Post Office guard. In 1796 the London to Cambridge mail-coach was charging 4.6d a mile to inside passengers, the same rate as was charged by a fast day diligence over this route carrying only three passengers. There were however two slower stage-coaches offering inside seats at 4d and 3½d respectively and taking at least 2½ hours longer. The London to Manchester mail-coach was in 1811 charging £4-4s inside (5.4d a mile) and £1-15s outside (2.25d a mile) and the rates on the London to Liverpool mail were higher at 5d a mile inside and 2½d a mile outside in 1812, rising to 6.2d inside and 3.1d outside the following year. Already by this date on some routes fast day coaches were providing competition in speed and were able to offer slightly lower fares. The Manchester mail was opposed by a day coach carrying four inside and ten outside passengers, the fare for the inside passengers being 3½ guineas (4.7d a mile). Fast coaches of this type could not afford to cut the fare much lower than this as the increased speed demanded more frequent changes of horse and consequently increased costs. A survey of fares carried out by the Post Office early in 1837 covering all the main routes out of London revealed that the average fare charged by mail coaches was 4.9d a mile inside and 2.6d outside. Day coaches operating over the same routes as the mails were charging 4.5d inside and 2.4d outside while night stage-coaches were fractionally cheaper at 4.3d inside and 2.2d outside.

1. Edwin A Pratt, A History of Inland Transport & Communication (1912) p331

At times of price wars fares could be halved, but running at these prices was uneconomic and when either the opposition had been driven off the road, or a truce concluded, fares would revert to their former level. Slower "safety" coaches or branch stage-coaches could afford to offer lower fares than crack stage and mail-coaches. The pattern seems to be for mail-coach fares to remain fairly stable from their introduction, but for stage-coach fares generally to rise from late eighteenth century levels until the 1830s, when those of the best known stage-coaches closely resembled mail-coach fares.[1]

The mail-coaches when first introduced represented a new standard in passenger transit and were rightly regarded as superior to the common stage-coach. As early as 1792 Palmer's insistence on high standards of routine maintenance for the coaches was being noticed, and there was a public preference for mail-coaches because of their lower accident rate. In May 1811, John Willan, an operator of both mail and stage-coaches, could declare that the former in consequence of their superiority were more often full than "common coaches". Already however a cloud was appearing on the horizon, the opposition coach, and Willan had to admit that some of these were running with the same celerity as Mail-coaches though this was not common. As late as December 1827 Charles Johnson, the Mail-coach Superintendent of the Post Office, could speak with pride of the superiority of the services and the quality of the passengers they attracted:

> "Persons of the first distinction travel by the mail-coaches, I do not mean amateur whips, but persons who depend upon the regularity, security and comfort of the mail-coach, and being less likely to meet with disagreeable passengers." 2

1. POR Post 1/44/123; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p38; Harold W Hart, "Some Notes on Coach Travel 1750-1848", Journal of Transport History Vol IV No 3 (1960) p151; Jackman op cit Appendix 6 pp 702-15; Freeman op cit pp 278-79

2. POR Post 96/23/23; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p31; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 4 pp 24-25

Fast day coaches were however beginning to make inroads into the market for this premier class of passenger. Mail-coaches suffered one great disadvantage as far as travellers were concerned. They were timed to fit in with the requirements of the postal traffic. Departure from London was at 8 p.m. For persons travelling long distances who would have to experience night travel on part of the journey this was no disadvantage, but those making shorter journeys could by seeking stage-coaches departing in the morning, complete their travel by day. This was to prove particularly disadvantageous to shorter distance mail-coaches like those from London to Dover, Hastings, Brighton, Portsmouth, Southampton and Poole and East Anglia, and to mail-coaching in Ireland generally. Particularly in winter, night journeys proved unpopular. Passenger traffic for the return mail-coaches to London by the 1830s was being seriously reduced by the inconvenient times of arrival adopted. Mail-coaches were scheduled to arrive in London at between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. so that the mails could be sorted ready for delivery before the commencement of business in the capital. For passengers however it meant that they arrived before hotels or private houses were open to receive them. In 1835 William Chaplin could declare that "mails unfortunately do not flourish except into very populous towns." Traffic from Liverpool and Manchester was still good for there were sufficient "mercantile men of spirit who value their time, to give us an increased fare to meet the limited numbers of our passengers." He looked back with nostalgia to a period twenty years earlier when mail-coach passengers were often officers, merchants and gentlemen whose custom had now been lost to day stage-coaches.[1]

Other receipts for both mail and stage-coach proprietors came from fees charged for excess luggage and from the carriage of parcels. John Willan, testifying before a Parliamentary

1. BPP 1819(217) V 121 p77; 1819(548) V 157 p76; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 19 p77; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 57 p105

committee in 1811 declared that the luggage of a passenger by mail-coach was restricted to 14 lbs in the case of inside travellers and 7lbs for outside travellers, and that extra payment was due for carrying any excess. He admitted however that this was his own regulation and not a general rule. The average load of luggage per coach was estimated at 2 to 2½ cwt and exceptionally 3 to 4 cwt. Stage-coaches might carry three times this amount of luggage, around 10 cwt compared with 3 cwt for mail-coaches, which were not permitted to load luggage on the roof. Especially in the late 1830s when the bulk of the mails, swelled by large numbers of newspapers, was making it necessary on some routes for the Post Office to hire and pay for outside seats on certain days to ensure sufficient space for the mail, passenger luggage might be carefully scrutinised. William Akers, a Post Office Mail-coach Inspector, declared in July 1836 that at times restriction of the weight of luggage had to be very rigidly enforced. He added, "we sometimes take off a gentleman's luggage, and that causes many severe observations".[1]

The carriage of parcels was particularly beneficial to mail-coach proprietors. Neither stage nor mail-coach proprietors could convey letters legally as this was a Post Office monopoly, though from time to time such transmission was detected. Bundles of letters might be disguised as a parcel to save postage, but after the introduction of mail-coaches in 1784 letters could gain little advantage in time and would cost more to convey by this method. Coach proprietors conveying letters faced a penalty of £5 on each letter so conveyed.[2] The Post Office did not however initiate a service for the conveyance of parcels until 1883. The mail-coaches proportionally conveyed a greater volume of parcels traffic than stage-coaches, in part because of their speed and regularity, but largely because of the security offered

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 22,28,33, Appendix 2 p50; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 58 p110

2. BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 p285; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 p7

by a mail-carrying vehicle with an armed guard. Parcels containing valuables and papers such as bundles of documents from solicitors and bankers too bulky to pass economically through the post, were frequently sent by mail-coach. B.W. Horne declared in 1836 that the minimum charge for parcels was 1/- and those for longer distances such as Manchester and Liverpool paid 2/-, but it is not known how representative these rates were of coach parcel charges generally. What proportion of mail-coach company income was made up by parcel traffic is not known but the contribution was clearly a valuable one. In December 1827 William Horne declared that mail-coaches were generally unprofitable to proprietors and were only taken on for the prestige brought to the operator which might bring additional stage-coach passengers to his office, and the valuable small parcels traffic. The London proprietors made additional profits from the charges made for delivering parcels to the addressees and from extra fees charged for booking parcels when a receipt of acceptance was required. After the reduction of postage rates to 1d per ½ ounce on 10 January 1840, weights of up to 1lb were accepted by the Post Office and much of the small parcels traffic of bankers[1] and solicitors previously carried by coach was lost. William Chaplin regarded this loss as the last nail in the coffin of long distance coaching. In a petition on the behalf of all coach proprietors dated 8 February 1840 and addressed to the Treasury, he stated:

> "Your Petitioners have long experienced great difficulties in maintaining their business against the competition of untaxed Steam Vessels along the Coast and subsequently of Railways. The New Regulations of the Post Office have destroyed all hope of improvement and ruin seems their inevitable lot." 2

1. Previously, in 1832, a special rate for bankers of one quarter the letter rate had been introduced for parcels of bank-notes weighing no more than 6 ounces. This concession was continued after 1840.

2. POR Post 10/26/293, Post 10/114; BPP 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 6 p39, Appendix 14 p59; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 54 p96; 1846(687) XIV 5 p190; G.A. Cooke, Walks Through London (n.d. c1830) p lxxi

Having examined the expenses of maintaining a mail-coach and the sources of income, it is now necessary to try to ascertain the profit to be derived from the operation of such vehicles. In England, Wales and Scotland, on all but short routes, both mail and stage-coaches were operated by companies of horsing contractors organised by a principal contractor in London, or in the case of cross or branch routes in an important provincial coaching centre, usually one of the terminal points. In the case of mail-coaches it was through this principal contractor that the Mail-coach Department of the Post Office worked, making payment for mail carriage, negotiating new contracts and issuing admonitions for slackness. The principal contractor was responsible for the general oversight of the route, collected details of the expenses incurred and income received so that accounts could be drawn up every four weeks. The "profits" made were then shared out on the basis of the number of miles each contractor horsed the coach.[1] From this share the horsing contractor had to deduct the cost of maintaining his horses and feeding and stabling them, blacksmith's accounts and the wages of his ostlers. Thomas Hasker declared in 1811 that to produce profit a mail-coach had to earn a shareout of between £4-10s and £5-5s a mile for each four week period, and Chaplin in 1827 stated that a coach could not be worked profitably at under £5 a mile near London and £4-10s away from London, figures with which Peter Mountain, coach proprietor of the Scaracen's Head, Snow Hill was in virtual agreement. In 1837 however in connection with reported losses on the Brighton to Gloucester mail-coach, the Post Office expressed the opinion that it ought to earn £3-10s per mile at least. At this level it was assumed

1. Philip S Bagwell, The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842-1922 (1968) p35 refers to "a Clearing House for the settlement of the accounts of stage coach companies" at the Golden Cross near Charing Cross. He is clearly referring to this system of companies of contractors operating through routes and sharing receipts. In this sense many "clearing houses" existed in London and the provinces. There is no evidence of clearing between companies or booking passengers on the coaches of other companies and in this sense it is something fundamentally different from the railway clearing house. Bagwell seems to regard it as a forerunner and pattern.

that costs would be cleared and a very modest profit result.[1]

The degree of overall profit earned on mail-coach operation is not clear, but it can be safely assumed that contracts that proved unprofitable would ultimately be relinquished, unless the Post Office were prepared to increase their payment for mail carriage. A number of accounts for individual routes have survived which show profitable returns

Table 62 - Earnings of mail-coach proprietors 1807-1839

Period	Route	Paid to contractors per 4 week period (per mile)	Source
1807			
29 Aug-26 Sept	London-Manchester	£4-8-1d	BC 546.43/M3908
1809			
3-30 Sept	Birmingham-Sheffield	£4-9-8d	BC 546.43/M3909
1811/12			
21 Dec-18 Jan	Birmingham-Sheffield	£4-4-3½d	BC 546.43/M3910
1813			
13 Mar-10 Apr	Birmingham-Sheffield	£4-2-6½d	BC 546.43/M3911
1837			
25 Feb-25 Mar	London-Manchester	£6-4-10d	POR Post 10/76
26 Mar-22 Apr	London-Manchester	£6-5-3¼d	Ibid
23 Apr-20 May	London-Manchester	£6-11-4¼d	Ibid
1-29 July	London-Derby	£3-0-8d	Ibid
30 July-26 Aug	London-Derby	£3-12-1½d	Ibid
1838			
6 May-16 June	Edinburgh-Glasgow	£4-7-4d	Stanley Harris, Old Coaching Days (1882) p211
1839			
1-28 Dec	London-Bristol	£4-14-0¼d	Ibid., p204

From the above sums around £3 would have to be deducted to cover the expenses of horsing so that the profit would in most cases have been modest. The large London or provincial contractor

1. POR Post 10/79; BPP 1810-11(212) II 707 p11; 1835(315) XLVIII 399 Appendix 7 p44, Appendix 8 p45

would however be involved in several coaches with a considerable aggregate distance. He would also profit from the provision of accommodation and meals to travellers, and might do better than clear his costs from the fees charged to his fellow contractors in the coach companies in which he was concerned for booking passengers and conducting the company accounts. His establishments might also gain prestige by their connection with the Royal Mail and this might assist in attracting patronage from the public for his stage-coach and general innkeeping trade. Receipts from passengers and parcels failed in some cases however to raise the earnings from some mail-coaches to a profitable level. The London to Poole mail-coach in the winter of 1790-91 was only averaging around £2-16s a mile each four week period. During the Napoleonic Wars the profitability of all coaches was affected by rising costs and in February 1804 the Post Office was of the opinion that mail contractors had been losing money for several years despite temporary increases given in the rates paid for mail transmission. In April 1811 Thomas Hasker declared that many contractors like those from Bedford to Hitchin and London to Brighton were losing money though some like the London to Edinburgh and London to Portsmouth routes were more prosperous. The Birmingham to Sheffield mail-coach which was profitable by the end of the decade was in 1803-04 losing money. The share for the period 25 December 1802 to 22 January 1803 was only £2-3-10d a mile and from 12 May to 9 June 1804 only £2-6-6d a mile.[1] Through the post war period until the mid 1830s earnings may have been more stable, costs lower and profit more satisfactory. Increasing competition from stage-coaches, coastal shipping and later railways eroded this however. The Aberdeen to Inverness mail-coach facing steamer competition was in January 1836 only returning £2-10-10½d a mile and an additional allowance had to be paid to the contractor to maintain the service. By 1840 the London to Worcester mail-coach was feeling the effect of railway competition and in the thirteen

1. POR Post 10/8/5; BC 546.43/3840, 546.43/3907; HRO Winchester Records - City Leases A/46/18

months to 8 February 1840 was only earning £2-14-6d a mile. Earnings on the London to Derby mail-coach were almost halved in September 1837 to £1-17-7¾d by competition from the Grand Junction Railway. The Exeter to Falmouth mail-coach was also in trouble and in the six months to April 1840 its earnings only averaged £2-7-7d a mile. To some extent low returns were the result of the Post Office trying to maintain strategic cross country routes on which passenger flow had always been limited. Such was the Birmingham to Yarmouth mail-coach which from 1 August 1835 to 2 July 1836 only averaged £2-5-7¾ a mile. The Brighton to Gloucester mail-coach in the eight months from August 1836 only managed £1-13-2d a mile and the contractors claimed that they were losing nearly £500 a month. Such services could only be maintained with increased Post Office subsidies.[1] Very few accounts for stage-coach services survive for comparison. The account books of the Bedford to London and the Kettering to London coaches for the period 1803 to 1815 are however fairly complete and show generally poor returns falling in some years to little more than £1-10s a mile and at their best little more than £2-15s a mile (see table 63 p303). In the summer months returns of nearly £3-10s a mile were achieved in some years but the winter period could average little more than £1-15s. At these rates the service could never have been a source of profit, though on shorter distance coaches costs might be lower than on longer distance fast mail and stage-coaches and an overall break even situation might have been achieved. The length of time that these stage-coaches operated does suggest that costs must have been covered. Of other stage-coach services where details are known, the London to Gloucester and Hereford coach was sharing £4-15s a mile in September 1806, the Londonto Bristol night coach (Monarch) £9 a mile in June 1834 and the Glasgow to Edinburgh (Commercial & Perseverence) Coach £2-7s in March 1839.

1. POR Post 10/41, Post 10/76, Post 10/79, Post 10/125, Post 10/127, Post 10/137

Table 63 - Receipts, expenses and "profits" of the operation of the London to Bedford and the London to Kettering stage-coaches 1803-15

Year	Total receipts	Cost of operation (excluding cost of horsing)	Percentage of receipts absorbed by costs(excluding cost of horsing)	Profits (excluding cost of horsing)	Average profit per double mile per four week period (excluding cost of horsing)
A. London to Bedford					
1803	£1477-12-7d	£310-16-3d	21%	£1166-16-4d	£1-15-11d
1804	£1588-6-9d	£471-0-3d	29.7%	£1117-6-6d	£1-14-5d
1805	£1691-9-9d	£426-7s	25.2%	£1265-2-9d	£1-18-10d
1806	£1721-18-9d	£395-10-5d	23%	£1326-8-4d	£2-0-10d
1807[1]	£1635-9s	£415-15s-11d	25.4%	£1229-13-1d	£1-17-10d
1808[1]	£745-11-10d	£247-7s	33.2%	£498-4-10d	£1-10-8d
B. London to Kettering					
1808[2]	£435-8-2d	£139-5s-3d	32%	£296-2-11d	£1-16-8d
1809[3]	£2991-17-5d	£903-6-6½d	30.2%	£2008-10-10½d	£2-2-3d
1810[3]	£2340-2-9d	£366-19-8d	15.7%	£1973-3-1d	£2-13-3d
1811	£3230-16-10d	£792-8-7d	24.5%	£2438-8-3d	£2-9-4d
1812	£3325-14-8d	£850-15-4d	25.6%	£2474-19-4d	£2-10-1d
1813[4]	£3562-5-9d	£845-2-10d	23.7%	£2717-2-11d	£2-15s
1814[5]	£2527-10-10½d	£461-4-1d	18.3%	£2065-16-9½d	£2-15-9d
1815[5]	£2596-4-4d	£626-3-2d	24.1%	£1970-1-2d	£2-13-2d

Notes: 1. January to June inclusive only
2. November and December only
3. May to December inclusive only
3. April to December inclusive only
5. January to September inclusive only

Source: BRO DD X37/4, DD X37/8

The variation here is great and the sample too small to draw any firm conclusions. If however we consider the evidence presented to various parliamentary committees the weight of opinion seems to suggest that the operation of stage-coaches was more lucrative than that of mail-coaches. John Willan, an operator of a considerable number of mail and stage-coaches from London, stated in May 1811 that the latter were more profitable as they carried heavier loads and did not need to change horses so frequently and were therefore less expensive to operate. Mail-coaches cost about 10/6d extra each 150-180 miles to operate and post-coaches, which had recently been greatly improved, were taking traffic from the mail-coaches in the summer months. In November 1825 William Lane, a contractor for the London to Bristol and London to Exeter via Bath mails claimed that they were only returning £3-8s a mile for each four weekly accounting period compared with £5 for stage coaches, despite the fact that mail-coaches were charging from London to Bath £2-8s inside and £1-15s outside compared with £1-18s inside and 18/- outside by stage-coach. This he attributed to the fact that stage-coaches could convey seven more passengers than the mail-coaches. The growing preference of the public for day coach travel might have tended to widen this difference in profitability in the late 1820s and 1830s on some routes.[1]

Profit margins of both mail and stage-coach contractors were clearly under pressure in the 1830s. Fierce competition between individual proprietors leading to price wars and attempts to increase speed and the quality of service involving additional expense were all factors. Mail-coaches because of the rigidity of their departure times and loadings were more vulnerable to such competition than stage-coaches, but both suffered from competition from

1. BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 pp 33,35; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 1 pp 10-11; Stanley Harris, The Coaching Age(1885) pp 200-09

other forms of transportation that was threatening their virtual monopoly position as carriers of passengers. In the 1830s the most serious was that from steam passenger vessels whose threat was especially serious on those routes which ran parallel to the sea coast. In the decade to 1820 services by steam vessels were largely confined to estuary waters and the opportunities for competition were limited. As early as November 1813 however, the mail-coach from Glasgow to Greenock had to be withdrawn as the proprietors "were much injured in their profits by three new errected steam boats." A contributing factor in the withdrawl of the coach was the recently imposed turnpike toll charge on Scottish mail-coaches which meant that horse riders could perform the service at almost half the cost.[1] By the 1820s traffic along the North Kent coast was being seriously affected. Passengers for Gravesend, Margate, Ramsgate and even Canterbury and Dover used the regular steam passage vessels that had been recently introduced for the whole or part of their journey in preference to travel by road. Loadings on the Bristol to Milford Haven mail-coach route were cut dramatically as it was now possible to sail by steam vessel direct from Bristol to Southern Ireland in 22 hours. The mail-coach and Post Office packet from Milford took 38 hours.[2] In 1829 the packet route from Harwich to Holland was withdrawn and with it the coach from London because of direct sailings by steam vessls from London itself. Further blows came in the 1830s with the development of routes along both the eastern and western coasts of the British Isles. Steam vessls were competing successfully for passengers from London to Newcastle and Edinburgh, petitions came from contractors working the Aberdeen to Inverness mail-coaches in 1836 that passenger receipts were a mere pittance, while in 1838 the

1. POR Post 42/103/266

2. Passenger receipts on the Post Office packets between Milford Haven and Dunmore were cut from £4,498-16-11 in 1825 to £1,519-12-8 in 1831. (BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p11)

contractors for the mail diligence from Nairn to Thurso gave notice to quit because of steam vessel competition. In the same year it was reported that there was fierce competition for passenger traffic between Glasgow and Liverpool with steam vessels, and that only one heavy public coach remained on the road apart from the mail-coaches.[1] Coastal steamship milage reached its peak in the early 1840s with over 1,400 miles of regular route sailings, and the number of passengers carried over the more popular routes was very substantial indeed. Over the 34 year period from 1812/13 to 1846/7 an average of 63,410 passengers per annum landed at Margate alone from vessels. Five steam ships were on this route in 1819 but this number had doubled by 1829. In the year 1841 53,436 passengers were carried from Liverpool to Glasgow. Coaches still had the edge over coastal steamers for speed, though on some routes, where a reasonably direct sea passage was possible, such as London to Margate, there might be very little difference in the time taken. Arrival times by steam vessels, unlike those by sail, could to a large extent be guaranteed. The great advantages that the steamers had however were a vastly larger carrying capacity and freedom from heavy government taxation. These enabled coach fares to be heavily undercut with a discount of around a quarter or a third over the rates charged to outside passengers on a coach. Where steam vessels competed with one another on a route where traffic was heavy, fares could be much lower. Those between London and Margate averaged 4/- in the 1830s and 40s or less than a quarter of an outside coach seat. Furthermore the ship passenger was not subject to the substantial further expenses of hurried meals at wayside inns and gratuities demanded by rapacious coach guards and drivers.[2] Only

1. POR Post 1/37/240, Post 1/46/225, Post 1/49/57; Post 10/37, Post 10/114; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 p11; 1835(313) XLVIII 399 Appendix 7 p44; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 27 p53

2. BPP 1837(456) XX 291 p3; John Whyman, "A Hanoverian Watering-Place: Margate before the Railway" in Alan Everitt(ed), Perspectives in English Urban History(1973) pp 139, 150-51, 153-55; Bagwell op cit pp 66-68

seldom however did competition from steam vessels completely eliminate coaching from a route, and inland services were largely unaffected. The next competitor however, the railway was able within a few months of opening to eliminate all coaching along parallel routes and many coach proprietors acknowleged the futility of even attempting to compete and withdrew their services on the day that the railway opened.

Chapter 9 - Mail Transit by Railway

Until the late 1830s the impact of railways on the coaching network was slight. Before this railway lines were relatively short, isolated from one another, and in no way represented a network that could challenge the supremacy of the coach. The signs however were ominous. By the early 1830s the economics of railway operation had been transformed by the development of efficient types of steam locomotives. The opening of lines in this period soon all but eliminated local coach operation over the same routes as the public flocked in unexpected numbers to embrace this new exciting and convenient mode of transport. No wonder that witnesses representing coaching interests testifying before the Select Committee on Railroad Communication in 1837 saw the imminent demise of their business. Benjamin Worthy Horne, asked if he saw from railway expansion "the probability of a great diminution of business of coach proprietors", replied gloomily "Annihilation is the best word to use for it".[1] Annihilation it most certainly was going to be for many proprietors. With substantially increased passenger flows[2] by railway, fares could be reduced to levels considerably below those possible for coach operators to match. The message was absorbed swiftly by the coaching interests who by 1838 were in most cases not even bothering to compete, merely withdrawing their coaches on the day the railway opened. The opening of the London and Birmingham Railway in 1838 immediately reduced the number of daily coach services between these two centres from 72 to 4. Railway lines not only affected services along the direct line of road but also those along neighbouring routes. The opening

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p94

2. By June 1838 when its entire length was open to traffic, the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway was carrying eleven times the number of passengers previously conveyed by coach. (Philip Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p107).

of the London and Southampton Railway throughout in 1840 had a dramatic effect on coach traffic on the London to Portsmouth road and diverted many Isle of Wight passengers from that route to the one via Southampton. The late 1830s and early 1840s was marked by a holocaust of long distance coach services. In the West Riding of Yorkshire the coach network was virtually eliminated in the years 1839-42. By 1850 coaching had been driven back into the remoteness of highland Scotland, mid-Wales, Western Ireland and Cornwall. Coaching was reduced to the role of a short distance feeder service for railways. By 1851 for instance, the most dense coach traffic in Hampshire was to be found on the Brockenhurst to Lymington route, from Andover to the railway station at Andover Road and on short routes in the immediate vicinity of Southampton.[1]

The Post Office had little option but to run down the network of coaches and to transfer the mails to the rail. Earnings from passenger fares and parcels had formerly subsidised mail conveyance and enabled the Post Office to contract for the transit of mail at very moderate rates. Once the railway was open coach passengers and parcels declined to completely unremunerative levels. If the coach services were to be maintained, the Post Office faced alarming increases in cost which they were not prepared to countenance. The main long distance coach routes radiating from London were the first victims of railway competition and were eliminated in the first onslaught of railway development in the late 1830s and early 1840s. The opening of the London and Birmingham Railway in 1838 resulted in the cancellation of all mail-coaches on this route, including services to Liverpool, while the Holyhead coach now commenced at Hartford in Cheshire and the Glasgow ones at

1. M.J. Freeman, "The Stage-coach System of South Hampshire 1775-1851", Journal of Economic Geography 1(1975) pp 266, 268-69; Harold W Hart, "Sherman and the Bull and Mouth", The Journal of Transport History Vol 5 No 1 (May 1961) p21; G.C. Dickinson, "Stage-coach Services in the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1830 and 1840", The Journal of Transport History Vol 4 No 1 (May 1959) p9

Warrington. In the same year the extension of the London and Southampton Railway eliminated London mail-coach departures not only for Southampton but also for Exeter, Devonport and Falmouth which now started from the railway station at Hartley Row. The next year saw the demise of all the London mail-coach departues for Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, Stroud and South Wales, these services now commencing at the temporary terminus of the Great Western Railway at Twyford, while the London to Glasgow via Ferrybridge and the London to Halifax services were also withdrawn in this year.[1]

By January 1842 mail-coaches operating out of London were restricted to the routes to Brighton, Dover, St Leonards, Portsmouth, Worcester, New Holland, Melton Mobray, Louth, Kings Lynn and Norwich, amounting in all to 1207 miles, representing only 27.2% of the route milage from London existing in 1835 (4430 miles) and only 54.9% of that of 1840 (2197 miles).[2] The last two London mail-coaches, the London to Norwich via Newmarket and the London to Louth were withdrawn on 5 January and 5 April 1846 respectively.[3] Main provincial cross routes and branches might suffer the same fate though the rate of change was slower and much still remained until the late 1840s and even beyond. The total milage operated by all patent mail-coaches in England and Wales in January 1837 had been 5867 miles and by January 1842 this had been reduced to 3727 miles, a fall of 36.5%. Much of this reduction is accounted for by the axing of main routes from London however. In Scotland railway development was confined to the central lowlands, and as a consequence the fall in the milage operated by mail-coaches was not so dramatic. In January 1842 1259 miles of route were still operated, or 71.3% of that of 1840.[4]

1. See appendix 4 pp 372-412
2. POR Post 10/13
3. POR Post 30/60/E6943, Post 30/61/E770
4. POR Post 10/13; BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 pp 2-3

By November 1842 however, 30 English railway companies were conveying mails, while six Scottish and one Irish railway had Post Office contracts.[1] With the expansion of the railway network, especially in England and Wales, the Post Office needed a different form of coach arrangement. Long distance routes operated and controlled from London became less significant and cross routes and feeders from post towns to the railway were established in greater numbers. With the railway network expanding rapidly in the late 1830s and early 1840s the Post Office needed flexibility and turned increasingly to the use of stage-coaches to convey mails. Of the 79 routes operated by this type of coach in August 1843 only two had been established prior to 1838.[2] The decline in milage of mail carrying coaches was to continue through the 1840s but railway development might encourage as well as destroy such lines of communication, and in 1846 11,473 miles were still being operated daily by coaches in Great Britain. This compared with 18,090 in 1837, a fall of only 36.6%.[3] The Post Office were however initially obliged to pay higher rates for coach transit. In 1837 the cost amounted to only 1.94d a single mile but by 1846 this had risen to 2.59d. The cost of horse hire for the mail-coach network had risen from £30,938 in 1837 to £36,469 in 1846 despite the fall in milage operated but this was to some extent offset by the reduced payments to coach builders for coach hire which fell from £22,356 to £9,260, again an indication of a change away from patent mail-coaches to an increased use of stage-coaches.[4]

1. BPP 1843(72) LIII 347 p2

2. BPP 1843(602) LIII 327

3. Bagwell op cit p146 states that in 1856 coaches were conveying mails 31,667 miles "a distance greater than that covered by all mail coaches immediately before the coming of the railway". The column in The Second Report of the Postmaster-General p14 which contains this figure is however headed "coaches &c" and clearly includes mail carts, horse posts and other means of conveyance.

4. BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 Appendix 15 p590

Railway competition and the elimination of the crack long distance coaches clearly had a profound effect on coach proprietors and the coach building trade. A number of provincial partners in coach companies bowed to the inevitable onslaught of the railway and sold up their horses and stock. Former coaching centres might be severely affected by the initial impact of the railways, as in the case of Doncaster where by 1845 property values had declined between 25 and 30% from the levels of 1840 prior to the coming of the railway.[1] However a surprising number of the more important proprietors, especially those in London, took measures to change the nature of their business and diversify to meet the needs generated by this new means of transit. This transiation was facilitated by the fact that as they hired their coaches they had no capital tied up in vehicles. As they horsed only the first stages of the route from London they had little capital invested in stabling and horse stocks in the provinces. This helps to explain the ease with which they were able to diversify to meet the challenge of the railways and the rapid collapse of much of the coaching business. Benjamin Worthy Horne and William Chaplin formed a partnership in 1837 to negotiate goods agencies with railway companies, permitting the collection of goods for transmission by rail and also the local delivery of such items from railway stations. Initially railway companies were only too pleased to place this aspect of their business in the hands of persons with experience of parcels traffic and with the necessary horses and agency offices to effect local delivery and collection. Their limited capital resources could then be concentrated on their main activities, the provision of track, rolling stock and motive power and the rail transit of passengers and goods. Coach services were also readjusted to suit the needs of railway travellers. In March 1838 Horne and

1. Bagwell op cit p139; Charles G Harper, Stage-coach and Mail in Days of Yore (1903) Vol II p39

Chaplin agreed to operate coach and omnibus services between Denbigh Hall (Bucks) and Rugby to transfer train passengers pending the completion of the London to Birmingham line. Also in connection with the London and Birmingham Railway, Horne and Chaplin operated a coach service from Tring to Oxford, while Horne continued the St Leonards mail-coach which now connected with the South Eastern Railway trains from London at Staplehurst (Kent).[1] Chaplin bought shares in the London and Southampton Railway as early as February 1834 and in May 1837 became a director. He was ultimately to become chairman of the London & South Western Railway from 1843 to 1852 and from 1854 to 1858. It is not surprising to find that Horne & Chaplin were the main goods agents for this company. They also acted as agent for the Grand Junction Railway and a number of other lines, in many cases having a privileged status over other carriers. Horne was also a shareholder in several railway companies and operated omnibuses. Edward Sherman, although he attempted for a brief period to compete with the railway on the routes to Birmingham and the north west, followed the other London proprietors in buying railway shares, operating omnibus services and acting as a railway goods agent.[2] Operating staff employed by the coaching companies were also absorbed in the changed activities carried on or found employment directly in railway company service. Chaplin in his capacity as a director of the London & South Western Railway was able to provide situations with the company for displaced coachmen

1. PRO Rail 384/3/23, Rail 384/3/46-7; Rail 384/279; BPP 1844 (318) XI 17 p130; Philip S Bagwell, The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842-1922(1968) pp 35-36, 67; T.R. Gourvish, Mark Huish and the London & North Western Railway: a study in Management (Leicester 1972) pp 40-41

2. PRO Rail 384/22/90; Harper op cit Vol II pp 273-78; Philip S Bagwell, The Transport Revolution from 1770(1974) p139; John R Kellett, The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities (1969) pp 39-40; Edwin A Pratt, A History of Inland Transport & Communication(1912) pp 325-26; R.A. Williams, The London & South Western Railway (Newton Abbot 1968) Vol I pp 34, 221; T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, A History of London Transport Vol I (1963) p40

and guards, and positions as stationmasters for some of his more senior former employees.[1] Coachbuilders who had been heavily involved in the supply of stage and mail-coaches found a new outlet in the provision of railway rolling stock. Wright & Horne were the largest supplier of passenger coaches to the London and Birmingham Railway in its formative years, and had by March 1838 received from this company alone orders for 80 vehicles. They also supplied special Post Office sorting carriages for the company. Altogether the London and Birmingham Railway were employing ten different coachbuilders in 1838 in London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Lancaster.[2] Nor was the prospect too gloomy for those with surplus coach horses on their hands. The increased use of horses for cab and omnibus duties, local conveyance of freight and the establishment of new feeder coach routes meant that good prices could still be obtained for surplus animals as Edward Sherman testified in April 1839. This continued demand for horses in the commercial sector is confirmed by F.M.L. Thompson's estimate of the horse population of Great Britain which shows an increase of 5.2% between 1811 and 1851 in the number of horses used for road haulage of goods and passengers.[3]

The Post Office was not slow to adopt the railway as a means of transit for mails. An approach to the Post Office was made as early as November 1827 by Thomas Richardson, a substantial shareholder in the Stockton and Darlington Railway. In a letter to Francis Freeling, the Post Office Secretary, he claimed that coaches on the Stockton and Darlington Railway were "going as fast as any mail in the Kingdom with one horse & fifty passengers & much safer than any Coach that leaves Town", and expressed the opinion that

1. Williams op cit pp 219, 227
2. PRO Rail 384/86/38-9, Rail 384/182; Rail 1008/56
3. Bagwell op cit pp 139, 143; F.M.L. Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense", EHR 2nd series Vol XXIX No 1 (February 1976) p80

"many years will not pass over before one horse will take every stage coach & shall I say the Mail in the Kingdom."[1] Horse drawn coaches on isolated lines, travelling at little more than a walking pace however, posed little threat to stage coaching and would give no advantage to the Post Office. The opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway on 15 September 1830 did however represent a new departure in railway operation. Not only did the line serve two major centres of population, but from the start a regular schedule of locomotive hauled departures, operating at speeds well in excess of those attainable by road coaches, swiftly established a near monopoly of passenger conveyance. The line paralleled part of the route of the Liverpool to York mail-coach, one of the more important cross post routes, so the Post Office was closely involved. Almost immediately after the opening of the line the Post Office approached the company, and on 11 November 1830 the first mail was despatched by rail. The favourable rate of 1d a mile negotiated with the company was a strong incentive, and two deliveries on each weekday and one on Sunday was adopted in addition to that of the Liverpool to York mail-coach which continued to operate until 1831 when three railway despatches were utilised. The improved service adopted from 1831 aproximately doubled the cost to the Post Office, and in September 1832 this was increased further when the railway company raised its rate to 1½d a mile to compensate in part for the railway passenger tax recently introduced by the government.[2]

By December 1837 three further railways were being used by the Post Office. The Greenwich Railway conveyed mails for the London District Post, and the Dublin to Kingstown Railway provided transport to connect with the English packets, but both were local services. The use of the Grand Junction in 1837

1. POR Post 11/16/1

2. POR Post 11/16/2; PRO Rail 371/2/54; BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p18; Aris's Birmingham Gazette 18 April 1831

Table 64 - Revenue and cost of mail conveyance, Liverpool to Manchester 1828-33

Year	Total value of letters sent and	Percentage increase	Amount paid for transmission including guards' wages
1828	£13,432		£223
1829	£12,789	-4.8%	£223
1830	£12,702	-0.7%	£223
1831	£13,506	6.3%	£465
1832	£13,356	-1.3%	£536
1833	£14,556	9.1%	£645

Source: BPP 1837(206) L 301

marked a new departure, for this line was clearly part of a trunk route which by the next year with the opening of the London and Birmingham Railway was to provide a through route from London to Liverpool.[1] Up to this point railways had acted as a minor supplementary form of mail transit. Over longer distances the advantages of speed, and the rapid elimination of coaching, placed the railway companies in a virtual monopoly position as mail carriers.[2]

It was at this point that the Post Office had to consider seriously for the first time its relationship with this new form of long distance transit. Up to the late 1830s it had dealt with companies of coach proprietors, largely men of small individual means. If it failed to come to terms with one group of contractors it could in most cases find others willing to undertake the work. The Post Office could fix the remuneration that it was willing to offer and dictate the times at which the coach would operate, the

1. The first mails were carried on the London and Birmingham Railway on 21 May 1838.

2. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 3, 19; 1837-38(278) XX part I 1 p339; 1838(496) XLV 573

type of vehicle to be used and the number of passengers to be carried. It came as a shock to the Post Office to find that it was unable to dictate to railway companies in the same manner, and in the late 1830s and early 1840s relationships were at times strained. The Post Office resented the monopoly position achieved by railway companies, and in common with many in government circles, and the legislature at large, was surprised at the rapidity with which this monopoly was achieved. Public railways in the period before the early 1830s had been generally regarded as undertakings analogous to canals; merely routeways to be freely utilised by all who paid the necessary tolls. The use of locomotive engines with their high capital cost of provision and the need for efficient regulation in operation had frustrated any hope that an element of competition could be introduced on major railways. Typical of the Post Office attitude in the late 1830s were the remarks made by Lt. Col. Maberly, the new Post Office Secretary, in December 1837, when he testified to the Select Committee on Railroad Communication that the inability of mail-coaches to compete had left the Post Office "entirely at the mercy of the railroad companies, which seemed inclined to exact just what terms they please."[1] The Post Office had been in the habit for more than half a century of commencing its mail services from London at 8 p.m., and arranging for incoming coaches to arrive in the capital at an early hour of the morning. This system suited the practice of delivering mail in the capital to residents and commercial interests alike at or near the commencement of business each weekday. Such times were less suited to rail travel. It was one thing to find seven passengers for a mail-coach departing at 8 p.m. and another to fill a train at this time of night. Even coach proprietors had in the 1820s and 30s found a growing reluctance by the public for night time travel and mail-coach passenger loadings had suffered as a consequence.[2] Railway companies to save cost wished to close

1. POR Post 1/46/209, Post 1/46/215; BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp iii-iv, 1; 1840(299) XIII 167 pp 3-4; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p49
2. See p 296

their lines at night and were apprehensive, especially with newly formed earthworks, about the safety aspect of running night trains. Further trouble was experienced by the reluctance of some lines to operate services on a Sunday in deference to pressure from religious observance groups, though mails still had to be transported on this day. George Louis, the Post Office Mail-coach Superintendent, in his negotiations with the railway companies demanded the same absolute control over a mail train as he had over a mail-coach. This inflexible insistence in wishing to maintain existing hours of mail departure and absolute control over the running times seemed inexplicable to the railway companies. John Moss, Chairman of the Grand Junction Railway declared in December 1837 that for each mail train the Post Office required power "to detain it as long as we please, and wherever we please, and to go whenever we think proper, to stop when we think proper, and to change it from time to time and, in fact, to place it under our direction." The railways saw no need for such rigidity and their attitude was expressed by Robert Stephenson in March 1838 when he declared, "I should think it worth while to postpone the business of the Post Office for half an hour or an hour rather than interfere with or prejudice the whole system of railway communication".[1] When, at the insistence of the Post Office, the railways agreed to run late mail trains the cost demanded alarmed the postal authorities. Companies realised that passenger loadings would be small on late trains and insisted on the Post Office paying the full cost of keeping the line open and operating the train.[2] The Post Office was not only resentful of the fact that no attempt was made by the companies to attract passengers for late trains, but felt that as mail-coaches were exempted from road toll they ought not to be charged by the railway with a share of the

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 4-5, 19, 44-45, 65-66, 91, 104
2. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 5-6, 52, 60, 117; 1844(318) XI 17 p130

interest on the capital cost, or the cost of maintenance of the railway track.[1] The railways on their part resented the way the Post Office competed with them for the carriage of books and small parcels which they claimed were carried at rates that undercut their own. The number of such parcels carried by the Post Office was however small. It was estimated in 1854 as around 20,000 a day, though 86.8% of these were charged at less than 6d in postage[2] and therefore could have weighed at a maximum only 1 lb and in the majority of cases could have amounted to only a few ounces.[3] The resentments of the Post Office at what it saw to be the unreasonable and uncooperative attitude of the railways and the riposte of indignant rightousness of the company directors and officials were evident from the late 1830s, and through the 1840s, though gradually the two sides developed the necessary tolerance of the other's idiosyncrasies to achieve a reasonable working relationship.

Attempts were made by the Post Office to promote legislation that would provide them with the facilities that they required from the railways at a low cost. They were successful in persuading the Select Committee on Railroad Communication, which reported in 1838, of the dangers posed by railway monopoly. The commissioners reported that the railway companies

> "have it in their power to prevent the due transmission of Correspondence of the Country by the means of the Post-Office, as well as to impose upon the Public whatever terms they think fit for its conveyance."

Convinced that the freedom from toll enjoyed by mail-coaches on public roads should be extended to railways, the Committee

1. BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 p xxi

2. BPP 1854(411) XI 1 p xiv; 1854(1816) XXVII 397 Appendix B pp 45-46

3. The rates were, general letter rate 2d an ounce, bankers' parcels - maximum weight 6 ounces at a quarter the letter rate, and book post 6d a lb.

recommended that the Post Office should be permitted to run their own engines on the railway conveying mails and a limited number of passengers without the payment of tolls.[1] A bill to regulate the railways based on the commissioners' recommendations was drawn up in co-operation with the government and introduced, giving the Post Office wide powers to operate their own trains, demand the co-operation of railway officials and providing payment to the companies solely for wear and tear. To the railway companies such powers were obnoxious. They saw no parallel between a public road which was common property and on which mails might pass without toll, and railways which were provided entirely by private capital and were in private ownership. The attitude of the government was stigmatised by one writer as

> "the ordinary desire of all weak governments to achieve a petty economy ... to claim rights which no corporation could fairly allow. They wanted to send the letters thrice as quick and thrice as often, for less than the amount they had paid by mail. They wished to avail themselves of roads formed at an expense of £50,000 a mile and maintained at an annual cost of £2,000 or £3,000 a mile without paying toll. And, however commercially important it might be that letters should be forwarded as rapidly as possible, it is also morally important that the large mass of railway promotors should not be rendered discontented, and that the government of a great country should not be parties to an arrangement at variance with justice." 2

Opposition to the bill was mobilised by G.C. Glyn, Chairman of the London and Birmingham Railway, whose refusal to grant such facilities to the Post Office as they required at the price that they were prepared to pay, had precipitated the crisis in the first place. By May 1838 the United Committee of Directors of Railway Companies had been formed to protect the interests of the railway companies, and they persuaded the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, to agree to amend the bill. Opposition from railway interests in the

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp iii-iv

2. POR Post 1/47/65; John Francis, A History of the English Railways, and its Social Relations and Revolutions 1820-1845 (1851) Vol I pp 283-88

House of Commons ensured that when the act was finally passed it was much more sympathetic to their ideas.[1] The act[2] compelled railways to carry mails at such hours as the Postmaster-General should require, but if agreement on terms of payment could not be reached with the company, the matter was to be referred to an agreed arbitration procedure. Whilst arbitration was in progress the company was to convey the mails. The idea of the Post Office operating its own trains was dropped as impracticable.[3] This act provided the basis for the relationship between the Post Office and the railway companies, though it was modified by further acts in 1844[4] and 1847.[5] The 1844 Act provided the Post Office with the right to send a mail guard with a limited quantity of letter bags on a scheduled passenger train at ordinary rates of fare, and gave greater flexibility for the transmission of mails at relatively low cost. By the late 1840s, although the uncertainty of arbitration awards and the large amounts awarded in some cases, was still a factor which caused the Post Office annoyance, relationships with the railways were less strained, and Rowland Hill, the Secretary to the Postmaster-General, stated in December 1846 that he regarded the present legislation as "sufficient", requiring only a "little alteration & extension to the powers already obtained."[6]

Following the passing of the 1838 Act the Post Office had the right to demand that the railways transmitted mails at times laid down by the Postmaster-General. Where mails could be transmitted at times when the company were prepared to despatch passenger trains the charge was moderate. At other times special trains would have to be run, passengers

1. POR Post 1/46/209; PRO Rail 371/4/241, Rail 371/4/254, Rail 371/4/264, Rail 371/4/270
2. 1&2 Vict c98
3. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p23
4. 7&8 Vict c85
5. 10&11 Vict c85
6. POR Post 30/61/E8385/1846

would not be available and the Post Office would be obliged to meet the full cost of the operation including legitimate company profit. The amount of accommodation required also affected the contract price. On some routes the Post Office required an entire van while on others part of a compartment or an imperial[1] on the roof were deemed sufficient. Contracts were also made for rooms at some important junction stations to enable mails to be sorted en route.

If the Post Office considered the rate the railway company demanded for its services excessive, the matter would be put to arbitration. From the start the Post Office used a Royal Engineer officer as its arbitrator. Until 1847 this was H.D. Harness and after this date Major John Williams. The railways also believed in the benefits of continuity and often used Robert Stephenson as their arbitrator. If the two arbitrators failed to agree a price, an umpire had to be found to give judgment on the evidence provided. This system of arbitration was embodied in the 1838 Act though it had been used earlier in December 1837 in connection with negotiations with the Grand Junction Railway. The 1838 Act however laid down no principles on which charges should be calculated. The Post Office tried in the original draft of the bill to incorporate the principle that they need pay no sum towards servicing the interest charge on the original capital cost of the railway, but this was not accepted.[2] Harness tried to put this argument forward in the first case of arbitration in 1838 with the London and Birmingham Railway, claiming that the basis for payment should be the same as that with the coaches i.e. a commercial profit on the carriage but no toll payment. As railway opposition had managed to effect the removal of this principle from the 1838 Railway Act it was certain that they would not concede it in

1. A large lockable box fitted to the roof of a carriage with a seat provided for the guard at the rear. Originally an Imperial was an outside seat on a diligence.

2. POR Post 1/46/366; BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p65; 1846(687) XIV 5 pp xxi - xxii, 189; 1854(411) XI 1 pp xiv, 376-77; 1 & 2 Vict c98

negotiation, and Harness was obliged to allow a return on capital outlay if he was to stand any chance of coming to agreement. In his calculation of the share of the capital cost attributable to the Post Office, Harness assumed a return of 10% per annum on the share capital and a full occupation of the line for 16 hours a day. Robert Stephenson however complained that Harness "contended that if a line runs six trains a day, and a seventh were wished by the Post Office, it should only pay the bare cost of the seventh train." Stephenson maintained that trains run for the benefit of the Post Office ought to pay their full share of fixed charges incurred by the railway. If the sharing of the charges on capital resources was one bone of contention, the other main one was concerned with payment in respect of interference with other traffic operated by the railway. The costs of locomotive power, carriages and station accommodation, and the additional cost of staff were easier to calculate and could usually be agreed with less difficulty. As might be expected, it was special mail trains demanded by the Post Office which caused the greatest difficulties in settling a fair charge.[1]

The Post Office had two main complaints about the arbitration procedure, firstly the uncertainty about the amount that would be agreed, and secondly the long delays that could occur before a price was fixed, especially if an umpire had to be appointed. In 1856 Edward Payne, Inspector- General of Mails stated that there were no general principles to guide the arbitrators or umpire.

> "the question resolves itself into one of individual opinion, and the consequence has been that the most conflicting decisions have been arrived at in cases which, if not identical, have been so nearly alike as to render it impossible to reconcile strange variation in the rates awarded." 2

1. BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 pp xxi - xxii; 1854(411) XI 1 pp xiv, 370-71; J.C. Hemmeon, The History of the British Post Office (Harvard 1912) p 77; G.R. Hawke, "Pricing Policy of Railways in England & Wales Before 1851" in M.C. Reed(ed) Railways in the Victorian Economy (Newton Abbot 1969) p93

2. POR Post 30/61/E8385/1846, Post 30/73/E7374/1848; BPP 1854 (411) XI 1 p377; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p49

In part the wide variation of awards was blamed on the lack of experience of railway operation possessed by umpires. Rowland Hill was firmly of the belief that the Railway Commissioners should not only settle a fixed formula for mail transmission but also for all classes of freight traffic. No such formula was however arrived at.[1] Arbitration could also be a very protracted process. In connection with the Great Western main line to Bridgewater, negotiations commenced in 1841 but were not finalised until 1848. The accounts of the Post Office for the year 1848-49 included payment to railway companies for mail transit of £319,253-13-4d but of this sum £143,913-0-5d was due to the Great Western Railway under arbitration for carriage from 23 June 1844 to 10 June 1848. Uncertainty over the amount to be paid for mail conveyance and the long delays caused by the arbitration proceedures in some cases made difficulties for the Post Office in efficient budgeting and forward planning.[2]

The Post Office consistently argued that the charges levied by the railway companies for mail transit were too high and blamed the situation on their monopoly position. There is little doubt that the cost of mail transit did rise appreciably from the late 1830s as railways came increasingly into use as mail carriers, for their charges in aggregate far outweighed those of the mail-coaches that were being withdrawn as a consequence of rail operation.

Table 65 - Post Office payments to railway companies for mail transit 1838-52.

Years	Average payment per annum	Average annual increase	Average percentage increase
1838-40	£22,591		
1841-43	£80,257	£57,666	255.3%
1844-46	£130,249	£49,992	62.3%
1847-49	£205,552	£75,303	57.8%
1850-52	£303,423	£97,871	47.6%

Source: BPP 1852-53(707) XCV 3

1. POR Post 30/61/E8385/1846, Post 30/73/E7374/1848; BPP 1854 (411) XI 1 pp xiii, xv

2. POR Post 30/61/E8385/1846, Post 30/67/E4232/1848; BPP 1849 (419) LI 29; 1854(411) XI 1 p369

The annual cost of mail transit had by the mid 1850s reached £443,000 of which £400,000 was paid to the railway companies. This compares with the average cost of around £155,000 per annum for all forms of transit in the late 1830s.[1] Rowland Hill admitted in 1848 that the weight of mails had doubled since the late 1830s but claimed that the cost of railway mail transit was three times as much as that by coach. Various comparisons were made between the cost of rail transport of parcels and passengers and those of mails. It was claimed in 1856 that the total earnings of the railways from passenger conveyance was £9,170,000 per annum whereas the Post Office were charged £392,600 per annum for mail transit. Thus the Post Office were paying 1/23rd part of the gross earnings of passenger trains for the transport of mails which weighed (including accompanying guards) only 1/400 th part of the load. Parcels were conveyed by railways at ½d per cwt per mile, yet mail unaccompanied by a Post Office guard was being charged up to 7d a mile. Rates for some mails were quoted at as high as 4/6d a mile while 25 examples of over 2/- a mile were cited. The average cost of operating a train was computed at 1/3d a mile. The Post Office felt that in a number of cases it was being grossly overcharged.[2]

Was this however the case? An increase in cost was inevitable. Already in the late 1830s on certain days and on certain routes mail-coaches were unable (largely because of the great bulk of newspapers) to cope with the load, and the Post Office was obliged to hire outside seats so that the bags could be stacked on top of the coach.[3] The reduction of inland postage to a uniform 1d per half ounce in May 1840 was bound to attract considerable additional traffic. The total number of letters despatched in the United Kingdom in 1838 was 82,470,596. By 1854 the total was 442,833,629, an increase of 469.9%. The volume of

1. BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 Appendix B pp 45-46
2. POR Post 30/73/E7374/1848; BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 Appendix B pp 49-51
3. POR Post 10/43, 10/44

newspapers carried was rising rapidly also, apart from the traffic in packages and small parcels which the Post Office was encouraging now that there was no coach network to convey them. Despatches by rail were more frequent than by coach and transit naturally faster. In the case of coaches a Post Office request for an increase in speed was always countered by a demand for higher rates of transit, as horsing costs were raised. The "excessive" rates of charge by railways were almost inevitable because the Post Office required special trains at hours which would not attract passengers and required additional railway staff to remain on duty. It was also reasonable for the Post Office to accept that costs might rise now that they were rightly obliged to face their share of the capital cost of the "road" along which the mails travelled.[1] A further factor increasing costs was the need to more than double the salaries of Post Office guards, now that gratuities were no longer available, though this was in part compensated for by the increased distances that they could work because of the increased rapidity of transit.[2]

The cost of coach transit in 1838 had been:

England and Wales	2.44d per single mile
Scotland	1.56d per single mile
Ireland	3.25d per single mile

with an average for the United Kingdom as a whole of 2.625d.[3] Some greatly increased rates had to be paid in the immediately subsequent years - the period of the transfer of mails from road to rail, where the Post Office felt it essential to continue routes affected in part by railway competition. By the mid 1850s however, when coaches were used only as feeders to the railway system, rates were little different to those of the late 1830s though it must be admitted that the same

1. BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 Appendix D p65; 1856(2048) XXXVIII 65 Appendix B pp 45-46
2. See pp 202-03
3. BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 54 p251

keen time schedules were no longer insisted upon.[1]

Table 66 - Average cost of mail conveyance by road 1854/1856

	1854		1856	
	No of miles operated per day	Av. cost of transit per single mile	No of miles operated per day	Av. cost of transit per single mile
England & Wales	17838	2.5d	19371	2.25d
Scotland	5137	2.25d	5003	2.5d
Ireland	8714	2d	7293	2d

Sources: BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p22; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p14

Although the cost of transit shown in table 66 is an average figure for all forms of road transport there is no reason for thinking that the figures for mail-coaches only would be fundamentally different. In 1838 comparisons of the cost of various means of mail transport revealed that rates for coaches, carts and horse posts were very similar in Great Britain though mail-coaches cost substantially more in Ireland.

Table 67 - Comparison of the cost of different forms of mail transport 1838.

	cost per single mile		
	England & Wales	Scotland	Ireland
Mail coaches	2.44d	1.56d	3.25d
Mail carts	2.56d	2.81d	-
Mail cars or gigs	-	-	1.38d
Saddle horse posts	2.63d	1.86d	1.31d

Source: BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 54 p251

In 1846 the average price paid for mail-coach transit in Great Britain was 2.59d per single mile.[2]

1. BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p14
2. BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 Appendix 15 p590

Initially rates charged by railways often compared favourably with coaching costs. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway charged 1d a mile, increased to 1½d a mile from September 1832, the Greenwich Railway 2d to 2½d a mile, the Grand Junction 2.7d for two of the four despatches in each direction, and the London and Birmingham 2½d a mile for day trains when only a third of an ordinary carriage was required. Only when special despatches were required would rates soar.[1] This was to continue to be the pattern. In 1846 rates varied from ¾d to 2s 7 3/32d a single mile, but in most cases rates above 1/- were a reflection of the use of night mails or other special circumstances. A similar pattern is to be seen in 1848 and 1849.[2]

Table 68 - Rates charged for mail transit by rail 1846 and 1848/49

	Rates charged per single mile Number of routes charging rate indicated						
	below 3d	3d and above but below 6d	6d and above but below 1/-	1/- and above but below 1/6	1/6 and above but below 2/-	2/- and above but below 2/6	above 2/6
1846	18	5	14	10	7	1	3
% of sample	31.1%	8.6%	24.1%	17.2%	12.1%	1.7%	5.2%
1848/49	54	16	18	5	8	2	5
% of sample	50%	14.8%	16.7%	4.6%	7.4%	1.9%	4.6%

Sources: BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 Appendix 16 pp 591-92; 1851(6) LI 7

The general lowering of the rates charged in 1848/49 compared with 1846 is probably a reflection of the growing confidence of railway companies in their ability to attract passengers

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI pp 18-19; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 pp 339, 341, Appendix 48 p233

2. BPP 1846(687) XIV 5 Appendix 16 pp 591-92

for late and early trains coupled with an effort by the Post Office to adapt its pattern of despatch more nearly to the regular railway operating schedules. A number of the higher rates for 1848/49 were not for night mails but for newly opened Irish lines such as the Great Southern and Western (3/2d a single mile to 13 August 1848 and 2/9 subsequently) and the Midland Great Western (3/1 1/8d to November 1848 and 2/8¾d subsequently). Railway carriage rates were to continue to fall to some degree but by the mid 1850s average charges were still around 8d to 9d a mile in England, Wales and Scotland and 1/3d to 1/6d a mile in Ireland.

Table 69 - Average cost of mail conveyance by railway 1854/56

	1854		1856	
	No. of miles operated per day	Av. cost of transit per single mile	No. of miles operated per day	Av. cost of transit per single mile
England & Wales	19,400	8d	21,069	9¼d
Scotland	3,440	8d	3,537	8¾d
Ireland	2,314	1/3¼d	2,503	1/5½d

Sources: BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p22; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p14

At these levels they were still more than three times those of coaches but if the volume of mail conveyed and the rapidity of transit are taken into consideration they cease to look excessive. Coaches in the late 1840s and 1850s seldom travelled other than in daylight hours, and it was the operation of night mails that raised the average levels of rates by rail.[1]

Although the Post Office claimed that railways were making excessive profits on mail transit, the companies always denied this. At first railway directors and managers were uncertain about the true costs of operation of their lines and in December 1837 John Moss of the Grand Junction Railway admitted this much to the Select Committee on Railroad Communication. Another

1. BPP 1851(6) LI 7

railway director who gave evidence, James Brownell Boothby of the London and Birmingham Railway was more certain. He quoted figures to show that the cost of operating a locomotive on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in recent months was 2/4d a mile and for the five years previous to this had averaged 2/1½d excluding any allowance for capital expenses. Thus by offering to operate special trains for the Post Office on the London and Birmingham line at £10 a journey, the company was charging less than cost. Such night mail trains, and in 1837 the Grand Junction regarded the 6.30 p.m. from Liverpool and the 7p.m. from Birmingham in this class, attracted few passengers and takings were said to amount to only £3 or £4 a night. On the Dublin and Kingstown Railway the sum of £300 per annum paid to the company in 1837 was said to barely clear expenses and the railway only co-operated with the Post Office as a third of its capital had been found from government loans. Railway companies had no wish to attract unnecessary attention from government by over-charging one of its departments, and one so vital to the nation's wellbeing. A number of Irish lines had been obliged to seek government loans to complete their routes yet these, who had most need to placate the government, were those with some of the highest charges for mail transit. Robert Stephenson, then President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, claimed in 1856 that railways generally performed services for the Post Office "at a rate of remuneration which affords little or no profit". The system of arbitration provided protection to the Post Office against excessive demands, a protection not afforded to other railway users. If the Post Office did not always welcome the results of the arbitration because the costs of transmission might be higher than those formerly paid by coach, it was more a reflection of the subsidisation provided to the Post Office under the mail-coach system, than excessive rates charged by the companies.[1]

1. POR Post 30/73/E7374/1848; BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 34, 54, 60; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 Appendix B pp 45-46

The substitution of mail transmission by rail for that by coach was not a simple administrative matter. The destinations and route of the railway might differ from that of established coaching lines in minor and often major detail. Times of operation and speed of travel differed. There was in fact a need to completely recast the established system of mail transmission, both main routes and branches, to accommodate railway mails. The effect of the opening of the Grand Junction Railway from Birmingham to Manchester was described by Lt Col W.L. Maberley, the Post Office Secretary in December 1837.

> "we have been forced to throw everything into the grand trunk of the Manchester and Birmingham Railroad, on which we have taken a great number of communications a day, consequently the communication between these towns is by lateral lines off from the main trunk of the railroad, instead of by lengthened lines as before from the Metropolis."

Many post towns previously served directly by coach from London now had to be serviced by local lateral stage-coaches conveying mails and feeding the railway.[1] This need to recast the system was to exercise the energy and ingenuity of Post Office staff almost continually as new railway lines opened and existing coaches were forced off the road. The problems of planning such changes were increased by the reluctance of some railways to operate after dark or on Sunday.[2] Apart from these were less fundamental but still important matters for decision. One was the need to establish where the mail and the Post Office guard should travel on the train. Precedent suggested that the mail bags and guards should be isolated from passengers and tradition suggested that the roof of a passenger carriage should be used with the guard perched immediately behind the bags to afford security. Not only did the increased speeds attained by trains make this exposed position very uncomfortable but hot cinders from the locomotive were liable to fall on and

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p2

2. POR Post 35/24/98-102; PRO Rail 220/1/62; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 12 pp 34-35; 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 5, 115

damage mail bags. The solution of providing the guard with accommodation within a carriage was very soon universally adopted, having been insisted upon by some companies from the start.[1]

If railway transmission of mails initially provided problems, it also brought with it obvious advantages that far outweighed them. Of these the increased speed of transmission was the most significant. Initially the speed of mail trains on the London and Birmingham Railway was a modest 18 m.p.h. overall, because of the fears of accidents from earthworks that had not fully stabilised, but even at this speed it represented a halving of the time taken by mail-coach. By the following year (1839) a speed of 25 m.p.h. was agreed with the Post Office and in July 1840 average speeds in excess of 23 m.p.h. were being achieved by mail trains on this line. On long distance routes even small increases in speed could significantly improve delivery times of letters. The acceleration of Grand Junction trains in April 1839 enabled 1½ to 1¾ hours to be saved on the arrival time at Liverpool, but this made possible delivery of letters to Irish destinations served from Dublin a full day earlier. Overall speeds of around or just over 20 m.p.h. appear to have been common in the early 1840s though the broad gauge Great Western could in 1842 boast an average speed of 27 m.p.h. for the night mail and 27.5 m.p.h. for the day mail. By the middle of the next decade mail trains were scheduled to average over 30 m.p.h. including stops to discharge and sort mails, which meant speeds of nearly 45 m.p.h. over parts of the line. Delays caused by accident en route were also found to be fewer on the railways than they had been by coach.[2]

1. POR Post 11/16/13; BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 p102

2. POR Post 1/49/57, Post 1/50/14; PRO Rail 220/3/196; Rail 1008/105/18, Rail 1008/105/52; BPP 1842(273) IX 343 p130; 1854(411) XI 1 pp iv-v, viii

Although much higher scheduled speeds were possible by railway, irregularity appears to have been a serious reason for complaint in early railway operation and the strictness of timekeeping by early mail trains compares unfavourably with that of mail-coaches. The early operation of the Grand Junction mail trains between Birmingham and Liverpool presented a very unsatisfactory picture in this respect.

Table 70 - Time taken by mail trains on the Grand Junction Railway - November 1838.

Route	Time of despatch	Number of times early or on time	1-30 mins. late	over 30 mins. late	average delay on late trains
Birmingham to Liverpool	7 a.m.	10	13	7	30.65 mins
	10.30 a.m.	7	17	6	30.17 "
	2.50 p.m.	10	16	4	25 "
	7 p.m.	13	12	5	22.35 "
Liverpool to Birmingham	6.30 a.m.	3	10	17	41.48 "
	11.30 a.m.	4	7	19	48.46 "
	2.30 p.m.	2	17	11	32.57 "
	6.30 p.m.	14	9	7	51.56 "
Trains early or on time		26.25%			
Trains 1-30 mins late		42.08%			
Trains over 30 mins late		31.67%			
Average delay on late trains 35.28 minutes.					
Scheduled journey time Birmingham to Liverpool		4 hrs 30 mins.			
Liverpool to Birmingham		4 hrs 35 mins.			

Source: BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 12-14

No reasons were recorded for minor delays of less than about 20 minutes and some of longer duration, but for the others the cause of delay are recorded as:

Weak engine/heavy train	34 instances	50% of sample
Engine failure in service	13 "	19.12% of sample
Slipping because of rain or frost	10 "	14.71% of sample
Delayed by other trains	5 "	7.35% of sample
Strong head wind	4 "	5.88% of sample
Derailment and collision	2 "	2.94% of sample

Most of the major delays including one of 5¼ hours were caused by locomotive failure, but the incapacity of locomotives to manage the load offered was the most frequent cause of delay and could result in the loss of over an hour. November 1837 was undoubtedly a black month for the Grand Junction Railway, but if the whole period of 20 weeks from 9 July to 25 November 1837 is considered, covering all arrivals of mail trains at Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, 56.4% were late and 17.38% were more than 30 minutes late. The reason put forward by John Moss, the Chairman of the company for the inadequate performance was lack of locomotive power from the line having to open with only 15 or 16 out of the 25 ordered, and the indifferent quality of the locomotives supplied by some builders. Delays on the Grand Junction Railway could at this period have serious results, for mails for Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland were despatched by this route, and could arrive in the Scottish capital too late to connect with coaches for destinations north of Edinburgh, the mails being delayed 24 hours as a consequence.[1] The Grand Junction were not alone among the early companies to suffer irregular working. The Post Office were obliged to complain of delays on the London and Birmingham Railway in July 1839 when in the first 18 days of the month the trains were late for 15 of them with an average delay of 24.43 minutes.[2] By 1840 however the record appears to have improved substantially.

1. BPP 1837-38(257) XVI 341 pp 12-17, 46-47, 61-63, 97, 101, 115, 121, 123, Appendix p140

2. PRO Rail 1008/105/38, Rail 1008/105/52

Table 71 - Regularity of London and Birmingham mail trains - January and July 1840.

Date	Departure	Number of occasions		
		on time or early	up to 30 mins. late	over 30 mins. late
1840				
January	9.30 a.m. down day mail	28	2	1
	8.30 p.m. down night mail	29	1	1
July				
	9.45 a.m. up day mail	24	5	2
	8.30 p.m. down night mail	18	3	-

Source: PRO Rail 1008/105/52

The Dublin and Kingstown Railway's performance in August and September 1837 also failed to please the Post Office. Although special trains run in connection with the Holyhead mails were covering the six miles to Dublin in an average of 37 minutes, only two minutes above the allowance, Liverpool mails conveyed by ordinary passenger train were taking 50 minutes for the journey, a speed slower than coach transit.[1] Neither were such delays to be found only on early and newly opened lines where experience had to be bought. Delays in excess of 30 minutes were reported every day from 15 to 21 June 1841 at Chester because of hostility and lack of co-operation between the Grand Junction and the Chester and Birkenhead Railways.[2] In 1854 a Parliamentary select committee was appointed "to Inquire into the Causes of Irregularity in the Conveyance of Mails by Railway" and it duly reported that "an examination of the Returns will show that upon nearly all the principal lines of railway, considerable irregularity has prevailed."

1. POR Post 10/161
2. BPP 1842(164) XXXIX 697 pp 4-8, 74

In connection with the London to Newcastle up mail which left Euston at 9 p.m. the average delay for the nine months June 1853 to March 1854 was 40 minutes, with six instances of delay in excess of an hour in November and 16 in December 1853. A similar unsatisfactory record existed for the London to Holyhead line where in October, November and December 1853 average daily delays were 30, 42 and 54 minutes respectively. Compared with this delays on the Great Western between London and Bristol averaging 12, 19 and 30 minutes respectively, seem less significant.[1] Possibly as a result of this inquiry some improvement did take place and in 1855 the Postmaster-General could report that "although there is still much to complain of with regard to punctuality, there has in many instances been a material improvement during the past year".[2]

The increased speed and fewer stopping points of mail trains provided problems for the Post Office. The needs of passengers by mail-coach had dictated that about every hundred miles a substantial break would have to be made for meals. Advantage was taken of this break to sort mail picked up en route. This enabled the number of bags to be periodically reduced and also the complication that would arise in accounting if every post office had to make up separate bags for every other office en route. As mails carried by rail had no such breaking points the number of mail bags that had to be made up at each office, many containing no mail at all, was proliferating, and also the amount of documentation and checking necessary. A clever solution was suggested by Frederick Karstadt, the son of a Post Office surveyor. This was to fit up a railway van, so that the mail picked up by the train en route could be immediately sorted for its correct

1. BPP 1854(411) XI 1 pp iii-xi
2. BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 379 p32

destination. In the case of the Walsall post office, the adoption of this scheme reduced the number of bags to be made up for each despatch of mail from 19 to three. For this one office this saved the checking and accounting for 64 bags daily with the corresponding savings at the Accountant-General's department in London. Similar reductions were made at all post offices served by this mail route. An experimental travelling post office was fitted up for the Grand Junction Railway utilising a horse box, and first operated on 6 January 1838 between Birmingham and Liverpool. The scheme proved successful, special carriages were built and the scheme extended to the London and Birmingham Railway when the line opened on 17 September 1838. As the west coast line to Scotland extended north to Preston, Lancaster, Glasgow and Perth, the travelling post office was extended also. By October 1847 the system had also been introduced on the lines from Rugby to Newcastle and Bristol to Exeter, and was in March 1852 extended to the Chester to Holyhead line.[1] A further innovation connected with the travelling post office was a device which enabled letter bags to be picked up and discharged at intermediate railway stations without the train needing to stop or even check its speed. Prior to the use of the mail exchanging apparatus, which was in use on the London to Liverpool route from 5 March 1839, trains had been obliged to slow to eight to ten m.p.h. and the mails exchanged with the aid of a long pole, a method then currently in use with mail-coaches on the roads. The Post Office was contacted initially in January 1838 by Nathanial Worsdall of Liverpool who had taken out a patent on the system, but the parties could not agree a price, and the system finally adopted was one devised by James Ramsey, an official in the Secretary's office of the Post Office. The apparatus was extended to other lines, and in an improved version devised by John Dicker, an Inspector of Mail-coaches, in 1848, was to remain unchanged into the twentieth century.[2]

1. POR Post 1/75/114, Post 1/75/285; Post 30/601Z/1838; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 p341; The Post Office, The Post Office, an Historical Summary(1911) pp 44-45

2. POR Post 1/49/347; Post 30/38/E114HH/1839; PRO Rail 1008/111/18; The Post Office, The Post Office, an Historical Summary(1911) p44

The ability of the railway to convey mails in bulk at high speeds was a factor in promoting the increased use of postal facilities. Robert Stephenson in 1856 went so far as to claim that

> "the scheme of penny postage, to the extent to which it has so far developed would have been impracticable, or if practicable, unremunerative, but for the facilities afforded by railways for conveying bulk." 1

The idea that but for the railways, the Post Office would not have been able to cope adequately with the volume of mail, especially after the reduction of postage in 1840, is supported by evidence that as early as 1837 mail-coaches were not always able on certain days of the week to deal effectively with the postal traffic on some routes. This was largely due to the number of newspapers despatched on Monday and Saturday. Bags could no longer be kept in the mail box and on some routes as many as 40 or 50 bags had to be carried on top of the coach on certain days.[2] The reduction of the inland letter postage to a uniform 1d per ½ ounce in January 1840 led to an immediate jump of 104.6% in the number of letters sent in the United Kingdom in the first year, and over the period 1839 to 1850 the rise totalled 320.8%. The increase in the number of newspapers continued and in addition the Post Office were promoting the carriage of books and packets. It might therefore appear likely that Stephenson's contention was correct and that the whole postal system might have been severely strained even if it did not reach the point of collapse, because of the weight of traffic, had not the railways appeared on the scene as carriers of mail. The Post Office in 1856 when refuting Stephenson's remarks denied that this was likely. They pointed out that in 1838 the gross weight of an average night mail was 4 tons 6 cwt 1 qtr, whereas in 1856 it was 12 tons 4 cwt 3 qtrs, an increase of only 183.7%. The weight had not risen in proportion to the number of letters for two reasons. The basis of the carriage of newspapers (free transmission for all newspapers paying stamp duty) was

1. BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 Appendix B pp 45-46
2. POR Post 1/44/102; Post 35/24/224; BPP 1837-38(278) XX part I 1 p114

Table 72 - Number of letters conveyed in the United Kingdom 1839-50

Year ending 31 Dec	England & Wales	% increase	Scotland	% increase	Ireland	% increase
1839	65,154,804		7,959,380		9,356,412	
1840	132,003,525	102.6%	18,554,167	133.1%	18,210,642	94.6%
1841	154,471,121	17%	21,234,772	14.4%	20,794,297	14.2%
1842	163,890,713	6.1%	22,215,583	4.6%	22,328,154	7.4%
1843	173,494,627	5.9%	23,473,216	5.7%	23,482,463	5.2%
1844	189,652,419	9.3%	26,502,077	12.9%	25,937,188	10.5%
1845	214,153,628	12.9%	28,669,168	8.2%	28,587,993	10.2%
1846	235,878,755	10.1%	31,135,060	8.6%	32,572,947	13.9%
1847	253,411,764	7.4%	33,261,163	6.8%	35,473,316	8.9%
1848	260,380,002	2.7%	33,563,101	0.9%	34,887,481	-1.7%
1849	267,188,410	2.6%	34,746,876	3.5%	35,463,913	1.7%
1850	276,252,642	3.4%	35,427,534	2%	35,388,895	-0.2%
Percentage increase 1839-50		324%		345.1%		278.2%

Source: BPP 1850(646) LIII 31 p2

not altered in 1840 and therefore the increase in the number sent was of a more modest nature than that for correspondence generally.[1] Letters now that they were charged on the basis of weight instead of distance conveyed and the number of sheets of paper, were also on average lighter. In 1838 28 mail-coaches were leaving London daily and thus if the 1856 weight was evenly distributed it would only have amounted to 8 cwt 3 qtrs, whereas mail-coaches were capable of conveying 18 cwts. Clearly at the 1856 level of correspondence, difficulties would have been increased on certain mail-coach services and on particular days of the week. These however could have been coped with by the employment of existing stage-coach services as mail carriers on these nights, and increasing the number of day mails which had already been developing in the late 1830s to give a second delivery to places within a 100 mile radius of London. The faster service by rail, especially for letters travelling long distances, may have helped promote some traffic, but the important factor in the rapid increase in correspondence was the reduction of postage to a low uniform rate, as is clearly shown by the steep increases of 1840 and 1841, a period when the bulk of the mail traffic was still by road.[2]

By 1850 railway conveyance had made considerable inroads into the mail-coach network, but had not eliminated it. The transport of inland mails both by road and rail was still in this year controlled by the Mail-coach Department of the Post Office headed by the Superintendent of Mail-coaches and no suggestion of a change of title was made until 1854.[3]

1. In 1854 newspapers still accounted for 76% of the weight of the mails, letters 13%, mail bags 9% and packets 2%. (BPP 1854(411) XI 1 p xv)
2. BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 pp 45-46
3. BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 pp 12-14

In part this neglect to make the title more appropriate was due to inertia, but it also reflected the fact that in the year to 25 March 1851 £47,300 was still being paid for mail-coach transit in Great Britain, though this represented only 8.9% of the total expenditure on mail transport for this year. Even if toll charges and guards' wages are included only about 11% of the cost of mail transit was accounted for by mail-coaches in Great Britain and about 24% in Ireland.

Table 73 - Payments made for mail transit - year ending 25 March 1851.

	Great Britain		Ireland	
Conveyance by railway	£301,637	56.7%	£102,223	69.1%
Mail carts and horse posts	£161,570	30.4%	6,871	4.7%
Mail-coaches	£47,300	8.9%	£37,633	25.4%
Wages of mail-coach guards(1)	£18,707	3.5%	included in total above	
Tolls on mail-coaches	£2,967	0.6%	£1,310	0.9%
	£532,181		£148,037	

Note

1. including those used on railway service

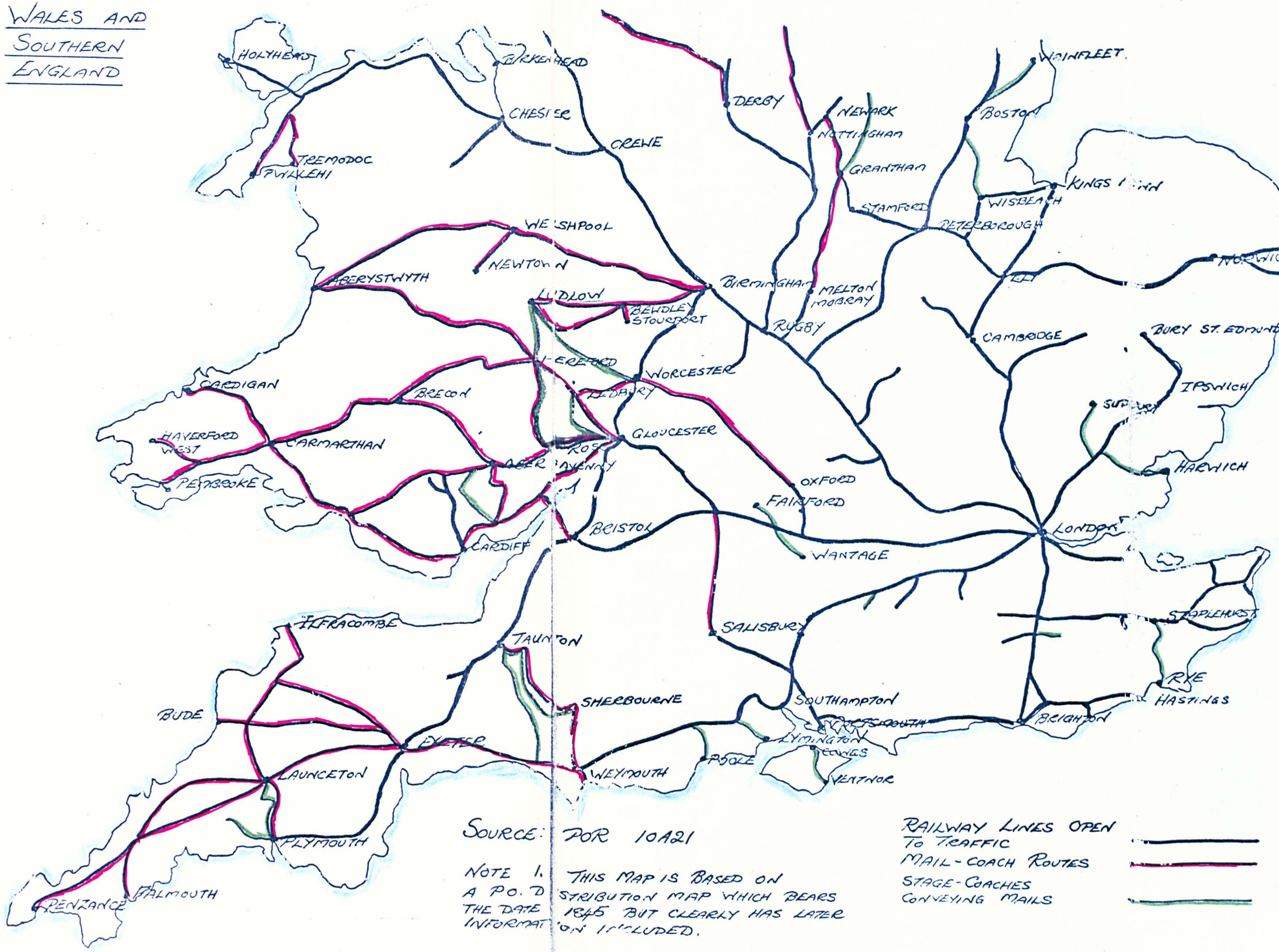
Source: BPP 1851(136) XXXI 1 p55

It needs to be recalled however that by this period conveyance rates per mile by railway in Great Britain were on average between three and four times those of mail-coaches, while in Ireland they were nearly nine times as much.[1] Thus the distances operated by mail-coach represent a substantially higher percentage of the mail distribution network than the figures in table 74 would seem to suggest. As late as

1. See pp 327-28

MAIL-COACH NETWORK - c1850

WALES AND SOUTHERN ENGLAND



SOURCE: POR 10A21

NOTE 1. A P.O. DISTRIBUTION MAP WHICH BEARS THE DATE 1845 BUT CLEARLY HAS LATER INFORMATION INCLUDED.

THIS MAP IS BASED ON

RAILWAY LINES OPEN TO TRAFFIC

MAIL-COACH ROUTES

STAGE-COACHES CONVEYING MAILS

1854 road services were operating 17,838 miles daily in England and Wales compared with 19,400 miles operated by trains conveying mails. In Scotland 5,137 miles were operated by road compared with 3,440 by rail and in Ireland 8,714 miles by road compared with 2,314 miles by rail daily. It is not possible to distinguish however what share of the road network was operated by coaches and what by mail carts and post riders, though estimates based on the data contained in tables 68 and 74 might suggest that coaches represented around 20 to 25% of the road network in Great Britain and a significantly higher figure for Ireland.[1]

There were still in 1850 substantial parts of the United Kingdom into which railways had not yet penetrated. In Cornwall only local lines existed, and the railhead at Plymouth, not reached until 1849, had to be fed by coach. The "Quicksilver" mail-coach continued to operate between Plymouth, Truro and Falmouth until 1859, and a number of other services conveying mails existed in Cornwall and West Devon into the 1850s.[2] Mid and West Wales relied upon mail-coach services until the completion of the Cambrian Railway's main line to Aberystwyth in 1864.[3] In Scotland both the Borders and the Highlands were coaching country. The Edinburgh to Carlisle mail-coach was not withdrawn until 1862 while the Thurso mail-coach survived until 1874.[4] The Irish railway network was slow to develop and it was not until 1852 that Dublin and Belfast were connected, while lines to the main cities of the south and west of Ireland were still incomplete by 1850. Whereas in 1854 the number of miles covered by mail trains in England and Wales exceeded that of mails carried by road, in Ireland

1. BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p22

2. Cyril Noall, A History of Cornish Mail- and Stage-Coaches (Truro 1963) pp 78-84, 102-08

3. Rex Christiansen and Robert Miller, The Cambrian Railways (Newton Abbot 1967) Vol I pp122, Appendix p165. Mails were conveyed by the Cambrian Railways from 1 May 1865.

4. Leslie Gardiner, Stage Coach to John o' Groats (1961) pp 190, 194, 196-98

MAIL-COACH NETWORK - c1850

NORTHERN ENGLAND

RAILWAY LINES OPEN TO TRAFFIC

MAIL-COACH ROUTES

STAGE-COACHES CONVEYING MAILS

BELLINGHAM
CARLISLE
HAYDEN BRIDGE
ALDSTONE
COCKERMOUTH
PENRITH
WHITEHAVEN
BROUGH
STAVELEY
HAWES
MILNTHORPE
ULVERSTON
LANCASTER
GISBURNE
SKIPTON
PRESTON
BURNLEY
BLACKBURN
SOUTHPORT
ORMSKIRK
BOLTON
LIVERPOOL
BIRKENHEAD
MANCHESTER
CHESTER
CREWE
NEWCASTLE
NORTH SHIELDS
SOUTH SHIELDS
SHALLEY BRIDGE
SUNDERLAND
HARTLEPOOL
DARLINGTON
BARNARDS CASTLE
YARM
REDALE
KNARESBOROUGH
HARROGATE
YORK
SHIPLEY
LEEDS
HALIFAX
DEWSBURY
HOLMFIRTH
BARNSLEY
SHEFFIELD
WORKSOP
CHESTERFIELD
MANSFIELD
BUXTON
LINCOLN
WHITBY
SCARBOROUGH
MALTON
BRIDLINGTON
HORNSEA
HULL
PATRINGTON
GRIMSBY

SOURCE: POR 10A21

railway mails accounted for little more than 20% of the route network.

Table 74 - Mail distribution network (total distance over which mails carried daily) 1854 and 1856.

	Total	Railway		Road	
1854					
England & Wales	37,238 miles	19,400 miles	52.1%	17,838 miles	47.9%
Scotland	8,577 "	3,440 "	40.1%	5,137 "	59.9%
Ireland	11,028 "	2,314 "	21%	8,714 "	79%
1856					
England & Wales	40,440 "	21,069 "	52.1%	19,371 "	47.9%
Scotland	8,540 "	3,537 "	41.4%	5,003 "	58.6%
Ireland	9,796 "	2,503 "	25.6%	7,293	74.4%

Sources: BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 p22; 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p14

As late as 1865 Charles Bianconi was operating a network of 2,500 miles with his cars, which represented three-quarters of the peak network of more than 3,000 miles which he reached in the mid 1840s. Many of Bianconi's cars carried mails.[1]

1. T.W. Freeman, Ireland - A General and Regional Geography (3rd edn 1965) p 232

Chapter 10 - Mail-coaching - Revolution or Evolution?

There is no lack of published work on coaching and in such literature mail-coaches receive particular attention as the zenith of coaching achievement. Despite its extent however, the great majority of the writing on coaching has sought a popular audience, and has signally failed to satisfy the historian of economic growth and social development. The last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a nostalgic outpouring of coaching anecdote and reminiscence by authors such as G.C. Harper and W. Outram Tristram amongst others. These works have been aptly described by Professor Alan Everitt as sources of "useful facts buried in a farrago of Pickwickian nonsense; the species is not yet extinct."[1] More recent works have tended to use these "pioneer" studies as their main sources, and where new material has been added it is often from printed sources such as newspapers, travellers' accounts and coaching advertisements, just the same type of sources that Harper and Tristram used. It is therefore no surprise that reviewers in academic journals have declared of this newer writing that "unfortunately there is little that is really new which emerges." Baron F. Duckham has stated that "of all great transport institutions, coaching remains the most neglected by academics."[2] Why this neglect? Few business records survive and progress is only possible through a detailed study of coaching lists in directories and road books which in themselves are apt to be confusing and even inaccurate. These can be supplemented by newspaper advertisements, but a detailed local knowledge is required to correct errors in directory material and arrive at figures of coaching traffic near to the truth.

1. Alan Everitt(ed), Perspectives in English Urban History (1973) p245

2. Baron F. Duckham, review of R.C. & J.M. Anderson, Quicksilver: A Hundred Years of Coaching 1750-1850 in Transport History Vol 7 No 2 (Summer 1974) p153

This suggests local studies as the best way forward and in this connection the articles by Dickinson and particularly Freeman are to be welcomed.[1] Fortunately in the case of mail-coaches the archives of the Post Office, which are relatively full for this period, and the reports and returns in parliamentary papers from the 1820s provide a valuable basis for study. After this material has been researched there is still however the difficulty of relating this small but important part of coaching to the field as a whole, in the absence of any but isolated local studies of coaching. There is however a growing interest in road transport in the first phase of the Industrial Revolution and the decades immediately preceeding it which has lately produced two full length books on English turnpikes[2] and studies in periodicals of the carrying trades and the part played by inns as centres of road transport. This augurs well for the future.[3] Despite the fact that serious academic study of road transport in this period is still in an embryonic state it is important to try to evaluate the importance of the introduction of mail-coaches by the Post Office, and the maintenence of such services over many decades.

1. G.C. Dickinson, "Stage-coach Services in the West Riding of Yorkshire between 1830 and 1840" The Journal of Transport History Vol 4 No 1 (May 1959); M.J. Freeman, "The stage-coach System of South Hampshire 1775-1851", Journal of Historical Geography 1 (1975)

2. William Albert, The Turnpike Road System in England 1663-1840 (1970); Eric Pawson, Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of Eighteenth Century Britain (1977)

3. J.A. Chartres, "Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality", EHR 2nd series Vol XXX No 1 (February 1977); G.L. Turnbull, "Provincial Road Carrying in England in the Eighteenth Century" The Journal of Transport History new series Vol IV No 2 (September 1977); Alan Everitt, "The English Urban Inn" in Alan Everitt(ed) Perspectives in English Urban History (1973); J.A. Chartres, "The Capital's Provincial Eyes: London's Inns in the Early Eighteenth Century", The London Journal Vol 3 No 1 (May 1977)

The effects of the adoption by the Post Office of a system of mail-coaches can be examined from a number of different angles. These are:

1. The immediate effect on postal traffic of the adoption of this new means of transport e.g. speed, security and economy.

2. The effect of mail-coaches as a competitive element in the general field of coaching.

3. The effect of the Post Office on general road improvement now that it had a more vital interest in the condition of public roads.

4. The effect of mail-coaching on the economy in terms of demand for such items as coaches, horses, feed and labour.

By a careful evaluation of these factors it ought to be possible to suggest if this innovation deserves the premier place in the history of coaching which has been often afforded to it by writers on coaching in the past.

The introduction of mail-coaches in 1784 by John Palmer was designed to effect two improvements. Firstly it was to improve the speed of mail transmission which it effectively did. Before 1784 mail carts and riders, because of the circuitous routes they were obliged to take, and frequent halts made to transact business, were capable of an overall speed of little more than 4 m.p.h. Palmer's mail-coaches almost immediately raised this to 7 m.p.h. and further acceleration from the 1820s resulted by the late 1830s in average speeds in excess of 9 m.p.h. Palmer's other object was to improve security and this too was achieved. Mail carts had proved relatively easy and lucrative targets and were plundered sufficiently frequently for the public to be alarmed. This again the mail-coach effectively stopped, restoring public confidence, although negligence by the guard did at infrequent intervals allow less dramatic pilferage. Both of these aims might however have been achieved by the acceleration of mail carts and the provision of guards for them, but at a much greater cost. Palmer's idea of using coaches ensured that these objects were attained and the cost of transmission actually reduced. The

passengers carried and the freedom from turnpike tolls helped to subsidise the mail transmission, the costs of which were often less by fast mail-coach than the much slower carts, still used after 1784 on many secondary routes. In 1838 the saving averaged $\frac{1}{8}$d per single mile in England and Wales and 1¼d per single mile in Scotland. Only in Ireland were mail-coach costs higher.[1] This saving is also a reflection of the lower labour costs per mile by coach because of the increased speed and the ability of the crew to work over greater distances in the same time. Mail-coaches conferred on letter writers the benefit of fast transmission, but the economies in transport costs were never passed on directly to the consumer in lower postal charges but accrued to the Treasury. Although the immediate consumer did not benefit, there was clearly a social saving to be derived from the adoption of more efficient means of mail transmission. The resource factors required to accelerate mails by cart were clearly much higher than those used in coach transmission.[2] These factors were available for investment elsewhere in the economy at a time when investment oportunities were expanding rapidly and the means of transmitting surplus capital to areas of investment need were undergoing rapid growth.

Mail-coaches infused new competitive elements into the field of coaching as a whole. Palmer was not the originator of the concept of the lightly loaded coach designed for speed, travelling by both day and night, but it was a relatively new concept in 1784 and confined to a limited number of routes.[3]

1. BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 54 p65

2. A rival scheme to that of John Palmer for accelerated mail carts travelling at the same speed as the proposed mail-coaches was expected to double the cost of transmission. (see p 89)

3. On the Bath road "flying machines in one day" are first mentioned in the 1762 edition of The New Bath Guide or Useful Pocket Companion but it was not until c1780 that such a service was operated both in the summer and winter months.

Palmer introduced such coaches on a nationwide basis, using them on roads where such vehicles had previously been unknown and over distances previously not attempted by vehicles of this type. The fact that the vehicles were carrying mails which needed to make connections with other cross routes and branches, and meet deadlines for delivery at their destinations, emphasised the need for accurate adherence to a strict timetable in a way that vehicles carrying solely passengers did not need to. The fact that mail was carried also ensured a high degree of security which extended to passengers and parcels also. Thus the mail-coach represented a strong innovatory element in coaching. Palmer's efforts to graft the mail-coaches to the existing system of coaching by employing leading proprietors already in the field, and allowing them the full benefit of passengers and parcels carried, defused the possibility of bitter and ruinous competition. It did however provide both for the contractors horsing mail-coaches, and those outside the system with aspirations of attracting premier traffic, a successful pattern to emulate and try to improve upon. It is however clear that by the 1820s mail-coaches had lost the lead that they had initially attained, and that innovation was passing to the fast stage-coach.

A similar pattern is to be seen in the field of mail-coach design. Initially the vehicles used, despite a degree of rough riding, to be found also in stage-coaches, did contain a number of successful innovations of a minor though significant nature. By the 1820s however it was the stage-coach that was the fount of new ideas and mail-coaches were increasingly criticised for their conservatism. One interesting feature of mail-coach supply had been the adoption of a common pattern of coach manufactured and serviced by a single organisation. This provided a number of advantages both in construction and maintenance, for inventories of material and spare parts could be reduced to low levels and semi-skilled substituted for skilled

labour thus effecting economies. In service, repairs could be more easily carried out away from the London base and the number of spare replacement vehicles reduced to a minimum. This enabled the Post Office to hire its coaches at very competitive rates up to c1820, when the advantage of falling prices of materials and labour were not fully passed on to the Post Office or the operators in lower hire charges, until the public advertisement of the contracts in 1835. The advantages of standardisation of vehicles and components demonstrated by the mail-coaches does not however appear to have been taken up in the field of coach building generally where many different designs were provided to customers' requirements and whims. Nor were these ideas of standardisation to affect early railway companies whose multiplicity of different locomotive designs and lack of uniformity of components parallelled stage rather than mail-coach practice with all the inefficiencies and higher maintenance costs that followed.

The introduction of fast mail-coaches gave the Post Office an intensified interest in the condition of public roads. They had for a long time been concerned with individual sections of road, which especially in winter, had delayed post riders or mail carts. They had invoked the common right of all travellers to indict parishes and turnpike trustees, a proceedure not infrequently adopted when the parties responsible for road maintenance seemed disinclined to take measures to rectify deficiencies. By the late eighteenth century road conditions were undoubtedly improving in line with traffic demands. William Albert sees in the lower carrying rates for the period to 1794 a reflection of road improvement and points to the rise of "professionalism" in road surveyors in the last decade of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth century.[1] Such improvements were in some senses a response to traffic demands, but the Post Office was one of the agencies prodding and encouraging

1. Albert op cit pp 79-80, 186-87

improved provision. The Post Office was also from c1810 to take a much more active part in the promotion of improved road construction, urging direct government investment or loan capital for main lines of road such as those to Holyhead and Glasgow and actively providing financial support for the survey work, and encouraging the improved construction techniques of McAdam and Telford. Government interest in roads in this period is often associated with Post Office pressure, which was a factor for improvement of greater influence than is acknowleged by writers on road transport.

Professor François Crouzet has placed emphasis on the long-term nature of investment in transportation improvement pointing out that "the minimum scale of initial expenditure was high, the gestation period was long, and interest charges on borrowed capital were an important element in the annual costs of enterprises." He therefore argues that the timing of investment in transport was "affected by shifts in the rate of interest, by the shape of the money market" and "investment roughly speaking fluctuated inversely to the yield on government stocks."[1] In connection with many forms of transportation investment this would certainly be true and canals, harbour works and railways exemplify this statement. With coaching however these factors are less relevant. The "routeway" along which the coaches operated was already in existence, the result of small inputs of investment over many decades and even centuries. Improvement by turnpike trustees although of larger dimensions, still involved relatively small capital resources compared with other types of transport investment. They were in the main local decisions to invest small inputs and in aggregate carried out over a long time span. Such decisions were less likely to be affected by market rates of interest, and Albert demonstrates that certainly up to c1790 the volume of turnpike development and movements in the rates of interest on government and other major commercial stocks bear

1. François Crouzet, Capital Formation in the Industrial Revolution (1972) p31

little correlation.[1] In as much as some projects of the post Napoleonic War period required government investment and the sums involved on road improvement projects were more substantial, market factors perhaps had a greater effect.

Coach services could be established with relatively small capital resources. The roadway was financed by others, the coach could be hired and the expenses of the operation were invariably shared with partners. Not only were capital demands small but a near immediate return on capital could be expected - there was no long gestation period. Thus, here again, the traffic oportunities afforded were probably more relevant factors affecting investment than rates of interest.

In the case of mail-coaches, the total investment was relatively small compared with that of other transport innovations. At the height of the system in the mid 1830s there were only about 350 mail-coaches with a value when new of around £130 each. In the sense that the coaches in England, Wales and Scotland were up to 1835 built and owned by a single establishment, they did represent probably one of the largest individual capital investments in the coaching field, having a value with the coach works and inventory stocks of around £25,000. After 1836 not only were mail-coaches a declining field of investment, as railways took over from road, but the building contract was shared between four builders. Capital involved in the operation of mail-coach services was shared widely with about 70% of the coaching contractors working less than 20 miles of mail coach route with their horses in the case of Great Britain. In Ireland however large proprietors predominated. In London and a few of the more important provincial centres investment was of a much more substantial nature, probably exceeding £100,000 in the case of the most important London

1. Albert <u>op cit</u> pp 120-26, 130-31

proprietors though a substantial proportion of this was in hotel development and stage-coach operation. In aggregate horses maintained for mail-coach use numbered in the mid 1830s about 8,750 in Great Britain and in addition 2,500 in Ireland and the capital value of the stock was just over £200,000, more than ten times that of the coaches.

In terms of annual demand for resources, the building of replacement mail-coaches probably cost little more than £5,000 in Great Britain and £1,000 in Ireland, but the maintenance of the existing stock of coaches, which employed about 180 men, would amount to somewhat in excess of £15,000. These sums were however small compared with those involved in maintaining the horse stock for mail-coaches which amounted to about £550,000 per annum in Great Britain and £110,000 per annum in Ireland. Of these sums around 80% would be accounted for by feed and the remainder in the provision of replacement horses to maintain stock. Of the other costs of coach operation, government duty on mail and stage-coaches was of importance and provided a revenue of about £50,000 a year in Great Britain in respect of mail-coaches by the mid 1830s. Other factors for which it is difficult to assess an exact aggregate cost were stabling, smithing and harness making, but these were relatively minor items in the cost of operation. The number of operating staff was never large, consisting of around 270 guards in Great Britain and 85 in Ireland.[1] A similar number of coachmen would need to be employed and the total income of the staff from wages and gratuities would amount to about £65,000 per annum. Thus total demand created by mail-coaching in the mid 1830s was around £700,000 in Great Britain and about £120,000 in Ireland of which the agricultural sector of the economy received about 70% of the benefit. In terms of labour mail-coaching and mail-coach building and repairing employed

1. These figures may seem low if compared with the number of coaches in service i.e. c280 for Great Britain and 70 for Ireland. Coaches on longer routes were however taken out of service for maintemance at the end of each journey, while the need to keep spare coaches and the fact that two horse coaches carried no guard further reduced the ratio of guards to the number of coaches required.

only about 850 persons directly though many more employed by innkeepers and in agriculture would have derived some benefit. It ought however to be remembered that by the mid 1830s mail-coaches represented only about 9.5% of all the public stage-coach sector. This level of demand must of course be compared with that which would have existed if the mail-coach innovation had not been adopted. It is not possible to quantify with accuracy the level of demand that would have existed if carts had continued to be the main mail carriers but it would certainly have been considerably lower. Carts required only one horse and one person to operate them, if as was usual, they were not guarded. It is probable that in the absence of mail-coaches a smaller and less frequent network would have been operated as was the case prior to 1784. Nor might stage-coaching have progressed as rapidly in the absence of mail-coach innovation and competition. Demand inputs would certainly have been at a considerably lower level.

The use of coaches for mail transmission is part of a pattern of expanding postal services that is evident in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. During the period of Palmer's office from 1784 to 1792 40 new post towns were established, but this was a continuation of a pattern of providing additional provincial post offices which pre-dated Palmer's connection with the Post Office. In the half century that followed 1751 the number of post towns in England and Wales rose from 344 to 508 an increase of 47.7%. This expansion was to continue into the nineteenth century as population increase, and urban and industrial expansion dictated the need for further facilities. Another development was the introduction and expansion of the local fifth clause and penny post systems to provide an improved service between post towns and the villages in their hinterlands. Within the county of Kent only one penny post existed in 1810 with four receiving houses on its route. By 1840 39 such post systems were operating in the county

with a total of 104 receiving houses.[1] The improved speed of transit afforded by mail-coaches, coupled with the increasing network of routes and facilities, at a time when the economy was expanding rapidly in response to many stimuli, ought to have resulted in a rapid expansion in the volume of letters posted and the revenue derived from them. This was not however to be, for the need from 1793 to raise revenue to support the war effort dictated ever increasing rates of postage. Between 1783 and 1812 many rates doubled, a few increased nearly three times, inducing a reluctance to use the service more than was necessary coupled with a determination, if circumstances allowed, to obtain the good offices of those such as members of parliament who enjoyed the privilege of free transmission of mail, to illegally frank their letters. Even after the cessation of hostilities in 1815, when prices in general were falling back to pre-war levels, no reduction was made in postal charges. Small wonder that a parliamentary select committee in 1838 found the Post Office not to be "an institution of ready and universal access, distributing equally to all and with an open hand the blessings of commerce and civilisation" but "an establishment too expensive to be made use of."[2] The evidence of public reluctance to use the service at a time of rapid economic expansion is clear enough. The rate increase of 1801 had been designed to yield £150,000 but failed to reach this target by £35,000. A further increase in 1805 had been estimated to raise revenue by £230,000 but produced barely half this sum at £136,000. The final increase of the Napoleonic War period, brought into effect in 1812 was expected to yield £200,000 but produced a mere £77,892.[3]

1. Brian Austen, English Provincial Posts (Chichester 1978) p104
2. BPP 1837-38(708) XX part I 517 p10
3. J.C. Hemmeon, The History of the British Post Office (Harvard 1912) p187

Table 75 - Average yearly gross and net product of the United Kingdom Post Office 1804-37

	Income per annum							
	United Kingdom				Ireland			
	Gross product		Net product		Gross product		Net product	
1804-08	£1,656,963		£1,125,787		£150,845		£59,923	
1809-13[1]	£2,018,350	+21.8%	£1,379,649	+22.5%	£192,969	+27.9%	£77,950	+30.9%
1814-18	£2,229,710	+13.9%	£1,531,280	+11%	£210,159	+8.9%	£86,010	+10.3%
1819-23	£2,154,124	-6.3%	£1,457,045	-4.8%	£190,431	-9.4%	£71,231	-17.2%
1824-28	£2,316,289	+7.5%	£1,558,079	+6.9%	£214,165	+12.5%	£98,290	+38%
1829-33	£2,292,081	-1%	£1,536,318	-1.4%	£244,098	+14%	£135,200	+37.6%
1834-37	£2,399,348	+4.7%	£1,591,112	+3.6%	£247,068	+1.2%	£132,975	-1.6%[2]
total increase av. 1814-18 compared to 1834-37	£99,638	+4.3%	£59,832	+3.9%	£36,909	+17.6%	£46,965	+54.6%[2]
av. increase per annum	£4,152	+0.18%	£2,493	+0.46%	£1,605	+0.8%	£2,042	+2.4%

Notes: 1. postage rates increased 1812 aproximately 15%
2. figures for Ireland are for the period 1834-36

Source: BPP 1837-38(278) XX part I 1 Appendix 26 pp 509-10, Appendix 28 p511

After 1812 revenue stagnated. No attempt was made to stimulate traffic by moderating general postage rates. In the 23 years from 1814 to 1837 the gross product of the Post Office of the United Kingdom rose by only 4.3% and the net product by a mere 3.9%. In Ireland the performance at first sight looks better, but the increase in gross revenue was still only 0.8% per annum (United Kingdom 0.18%), and the considerably improved yield of net product must be considered as an attempt to get nearer to the profit to cost ratio of the rest of the United Kingdom from a position where in the period 1814-18 59.1% of the gross revenue was being absorbed in operating costs (United Kingdom 33.4%). By the late 1830s this gap had been reduced, and whereas in Ireland for the period 1834-36 expenses were only absorbing 46.2% of the gross revenue, the figure for the United Kingdom was still better at 33.7%.[1] This stagnation was occurring at a period when a considerable acceleration of mail-coaches on the main lines was effected, and increased branch coach network introduced and local posts expanded. But for the excessive rates of postage and the consequent evasion and abuse of franking, these improved provisions ought to have encouraged increased traffic as in the period immediately following the introduction of mail-coaches in 1784.[2] The economy was from 1815 subject to periods of depression especially in the late 1810s and the early 1830s, but Deane and Cole estimate the total national product to have increased about 2.9% per annum between the decades 1801-11 and 1831-41 with the manufacturing, mining and building sector increasing 4.7% and trade and transport 3% per annum.[3] Against this background the near stagnation of postal revenue is to be deplored. Only the despatch of newspapers,

1. See table 75 p 355
2. See table 18 pp 112-13, table 24 p124
3. Phyllis Deane and W.A. Cole, British Economic Growth 1688-1959 (2nd edn 1969) p170

which were in effect carried free, and franked mail, enjoyed any growth. The value of postage, if it had been levied on such items, was estimated to be £631,333 in 1815 but by 1837 this had reached £1,064,874, an increase of 56.2% or 2.56% per annum.[1]

This pattern of near stagnation in the postal traffic was however to be dramatically changed by the reduction in inland postage to a uniform penny a half ounce for pre-paid letters from January 1840. In the first year alone the volume of letters more than doubled and even by the late 1840s an average percentage increase of 7.63% per annum in volume was being achieved. By 1855 an average of 19 letters per head of population were received each year in England and Wales, while the average for Scotland was 15. The lower level of both income and literacy in Ireland was however reflected in the figure of only seven letters per head in this part of the United Kingdom.[2] After 1840 the much lower income from each letter carried was however bound to affect the profitability of the Post Office. Rowland Hill when promoting his plan for a uniform penny rate of postage had prophesied that revenue would not decline by more than an eighth.[3] In the event gross revenue fell by rather more than a third, while inevitably costs rose with the higher volume of mail handled. Profitability was seriously reduced and averaged for the three years following the reform only 33.6% of its level for the previous three year period.[4] It was not to reach its former level in money terms again until the mid 1870s.[5] The public were not only enjoying a

1. See Appendix 3 pp 370-71
2. BPP 1856(2048) XXXVII 65 p16
3. Howard Robinson, The British Post Office - A History (Princeton 1948) p321
4. See table 76 p358
5. Hemmeon op cit Appendix table VI pp 249-51

Table 76 - Average gross and net product of the United Kingdom Post Office 1837-51

Years	Av. gross revenue		Av. cost of management	Av. net revenue	
1837-39[1]	£2,358,927		£710,360	£1,648,567	
1840-42	£1,479,010	-37.3%	£924,784	£554,226	-66.4%
1843-45	£1,737,838	17.5%	£1,030,452	£707,386	27.6%
1846-48	£2,096,185	20.6%	£1,246,172	£850,013	20.2%
1849-51	£2,284,067	9%	£1,363,171	£920,896	8.3%
Cost of management as a percentage of gross revenue					
1837-39			30.1%		
1840-42			62.5%		
1843-45			59.3%		
1846-48			59.4%		
1849-51			59.9%		

Note:

1. Years ending 5 January i.e. 1837-39 covers the period to 5 January 1840.

Source: BPP 1854(1816) XXVII 397 Appendix F p68

much lower rate of postage in the period following 1840 but receiving an ever improving service, which in itself helped to promote traffic. Railway transit speeded delivery of mail while the increasing network of post offices and extended house delivery made it easier for the public to use the service. The number of post offices in the United Kingdom rose from 4,028 in 1840 to 9,973 by 1854.[1] The effect of the reduction in postage was manifold. Those who previously could not afford to use the service were now able to do so, while the mail could now be used on a much wider basis to spread intelligence not only to assist trade and commerce but to propogate the cause of economic, religious, social, cultural and political groups in the community. After the establishment of the uniform penny

1. Hemmeon op cit p71

postage rate, Richard Cobden wrote to Rowland Hill:

> "it is a terrible engine for upsetting monopoly and corruption; witness our [Anti Corn Law] League operations, the spawn of your penny postage."

Cobden is also reported to have prophetically declared, on hearing of the passage of the penny post bill, "There go the Corn Laws".[1]

Despite the fact that the full benefit of improved mail-coach services and an increasing network of routes and facilities was partially denied to the public by high postage rates until after 1840, these developments did play an important part in promoting economic growth. Phyllis Deane has pointed out that "an efficient market, whether it be in goods or capital or men or ideas, depends largely on a rapid and free flow of information as well as of things".[2] The Post Office was the major agency in disseminating information; the mail-coach and later the mail train, the main means by which sources of intelligence as well as travellers were speeded. Intelligence as much as easier communication enabled traders and manufacturers to keep stocks of raw materials and finished goods at lower levels. The lag between the delivery of goods and the receipt of payment could be reduced and remittances made much more easily. In the mid-eighteenth century Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen had been obliged to adopt a complicated arrangement of barter, cash and bills of exchange to settle and collect debts, often using carriers as his agent. Credit of between four and seven months was common.[3] The development of banking, using the post as the agency of transmission, largely eliminated the need for such delay by the early nineteenth century. The Post Office itself entered

1. Quoted in Robinson op cit p302
2. Phyllis Deane, The First Industrial Revolution(1965) p82
3. T.S. Willan, An Eighteenth-Century Shopkeeper - Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen (Manchester 1970) pp 42-46

the field of money transmission. As early as 1791 Post Office officials at the London headquarters had initiated a system of money orders as a private venture using provincial postmasters as their agents. In 1838 the system was taken under official control, the rates of commission reduced and the number of orders transmitted rose from 188,000 in 1839 to 1,500,000 by 1842.[1] By such means capital and entrepreneurial time could be released for more productive purposes.

Ease of intelligence was a vital factor in enabling national as opposed to regional marketing to progress. Agricultural produce and manufactures alike could be produced in those areas most suited by their resources to provide goods and commodities most economically. Pawson points out that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

> "the friction of distance was being steadily overcome as firms were able to locate the different parts of their enterprise - marketing and production - in the most adventageous places, and control their labour forces, agents and salesmen from afar." 2

The ability to communicate rapidly by post and to be aware of market prices, availability of future supplies of raw material and opportunities to dispose of production was an important factor in concentrating industry in localities that had favourable production characteristics e.g. ceramics in Staffordshire, cotton textiles in South Lancashire. Distance from markets was less of a critical factor, for contact with customers and agents was relatively easy, and national markets could be envisaged which would enable advantage to be taken of economies of scale. In agriculture grain production could be increasingly concentrated in the

1. Hemmeon op cit p71

2. Eric Pawson, Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of Eighteenth Century Britain (1977) p309

east, dairying and meat production in the west in accordance with climatic suitability. The rise of London population and that of the new urban conurbations in the industrial Midlands and the North again were factors in making agriculture more commercial and market-orientated and therefore more efficient.

Rapid intelligence by post was not only an aid to the establishment of national rather than regional marketing, but it was an important factor in binding the nation together. It helped to spread a common culture, a common way of thought. London fashions could be quickly absorbed in the provinces through the agency of letters, newspapers and periodicals, often transmitted by post. Political decisions made in London could be rapidly communicated and commented upon by the provinces and a swift response organised if they were not to their liking, and threatened regional interests. Especially after the reduction of postage to a penny in 1840 the post could become the agency by which working class thought, culture and religion could be influenced. Even before 1840 change was not absent. By 1814 John Hodgson could comment on the way that the opening up of Westmorland was changing the character of the region introducing a "revolution in buildings, dress, furniture, food, manners and literature"and eliminating "the peculiarities of this county ... now verging fast into oblivion." This change he dated from the introduction of stage-coaching on the Glasgow road over Stainmore in 1774 and especially the introduction in 1786 on the Kendal and Shap road of the mail-coach.[1] John Palmer's scheme to send mail by coach was to stimulate coaching activity and speed the mails, both important factors in breaking down isolation and regionalism and in promoting a national market for goods and a national forum for ideas in politics as well as commerce, invention and the arts.

1. J. Hodgson, "Westmoreland" p43 in John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley (ed), The Beauties of England and Wales Vol XV (1814).

The influence exerted by the mail-coach, and the improved intelligence network and passenger conveyance that resulted from it, was of a subtle nature, difficult to quantify. Its effects were not dramatic but widely pervasive. The establishment of the network did not involve vast capital outlays over relatively short time spans such as canals and railways were to. The mail-coach network was not a large employer of labour either. To the citizens of late Georgian Britain however the speed and efficiency of the system seemed new and revolutionary. The passage of the coach with its thundering horses racing along the turnpike roads had a drama which caught their immagination and made heroes of the coachmen whose skill controlled the firey galloping steeds which made such swift progress possible. In retrospect however the mail-coach did not represent a major revolutionary change in British transport, it was part of a pattern of improvement in road transportation evolved over several centuries. It fits into the pattern of road improvement from the Elizabethan highway acts through turnpike development, largely of the eighteenth century, to the establishment of the science of road engineering in the early nineteenth century. It fits also into the pattern of evolving and expanding carrier and coach services which were a response to economic expansion, widening horizons and increased leisure demands which stimulated and took advantage of these road improvements. It was part of an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary movement.

Appendix 1 - Gross postal revenue of the counties of Devon, Kent, Lancashire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire - 1721-1801

A. Devon

	1721	1731	1741	1751	% increase 1721-51	1801	% increase 1751-1801
Ashburton	£60-17-8	£51-8-7	£56-7-4	£47-16-5	-21.5%	£732-12s	1432%
Axminster	£31-15-4	£29-17-8	£28-12-8	£31-16-4	0.16%	£550-12-1	1631%
Barnstaple	£326-19-4	£245-10s	£269-1-4	£205-1-4	-37.3%	£1325-10s	546.4%
Biddeford	-	-	-	-	-	£988-7-11	-
Brixham	-	-	-	-	-	£2510-3-4	-
Chudleigh	-	-	-	-	-	£289-14-1	-
Chumleigh	-	-	-	-	-	£81-18s*	-
Collumpton	-	-	-	-	-	£345-19-11	-
Crediton	-	-	-	-	-	£803-19-2	-
Dartmouth	£117-6-3	£109-1-1	£152-17-4	£169-11-9	44.6%	£1128-15-10	565.6%
Exeter	£1812-13-1	£1309-5-9	£1256-9-9	£1303-5-11	-28.1%	£6439-7-3	394.1%
Exmouth	-	-	-	-	-	£477-9-10	-
Honiton	£146-10-10	£116-8-1	£116-1-2	£97-14-11	-33.3%	£841-18-4	761.3%
Kingsbridge	-	-	-	-	-	£414-6-4	-
Newton Abbot	-	-	-	-	-	£904-1-6	-
Oakhampton	£19-13-10	£89-5-4	£86-17-3	£92-12-5	370.4%	£207-17-10	124.5%
Plymouth	£1418-13-7	£830-2-3	£659-17-8	£814-16-5	-42.6%	£7243-10s	789%
Plymouth Dock	-	-	-	-	-	£6264-3-6	-
Sidmouth	-	-	-	-	-	£383-0-3	-
South Moulton	-	-	-	-	-	£207-12-4*	-
Tavistock	-	-	-	-	-	£482-3-3	-
Teignmouth	-	-	-	-	-	£1042-1-1	-
Tiverton	£304-16-9	£253-4s	£178-14-2	£155-12-2	-49%	£966-10-9	521,1%
Torrington	-	-	-	-	-	£168-19-7*	-
Topsham	-	-	-	-	-	£363-2-4	-
Totness	£91-5-7	£93-15-2	£96-16-2	£106-13-7	16.9%	£768-18-6	620.8%
Totals	£4330-12-3	£3127-17-11	£2901-14-10	£3025-1-3	-30.15%	£35,932-15s	1087.8%

B. Kent

	1721	1731	1741	1751	% increase 1721-51	1801	% increase 1751-1801
Dartford	£101-9-1	£101-11-3	£108-1-3	£111-13-8	10.1%	£775-12-10	594.5%
Gravesend	£131-8s	£108-11-10	£141-15-9	£122-13-11	-6.6%	£1000-7-5	715.3%
Rochester	£263-7s	£188-10-3	£244-3-1	£253-16-6	-3.6%	£1823-10-4†	653.7%
Chatham	£355-6-1	£255-0-9	£330-11-2	£300-14-4	-15.4%	£2266-11-1†	735.9%
Maidstone	£337-9-9	£275-2-10	£317-5-2	£289-19-8	-14.1%	£2423-17-6	611.1%
West Malling	£44-16-1	£47-16-3	£48-10-9	£50-17-10	13.6%		
Ashford	£159-13-4	£162-17-9	£126-18-2	£125-3-7	-21.6%	£669-12-11	434.9%
Sittingbourne	£85-17-10	£74-16-4	£105-15-2	£82-8-2	-4.1%	£503-17-10	511.4%
Queenborough	£98-18-11	£70-2-6	£90-4-9	£92-17-1	-6.2%	£213-18-5	2960.2%
Sheerness	-	-	-	-	-	£2677-9-8	
Faversham	£121-1s	£118-2-2	£126-14-9	£111-10-9	-7.9%	£821-8-10	636.5%
Canterbury	£508-17-5	£409-12-5	£449-7-6	£475-1s	-6.6%	£2794-19-1	488.3%
Dover	£220-9-2	£216-17-8	£255-0-2	£252-4-10	14.4%	£2066-18-3	719.4%
Wingham	£20-16s	£22-15-3	£31-2-6	£34-14-8	70%	£138-10-9	298.9%
Deal	£249-15-3	£154-7-11	£178-15-1	£147-13-1	-40.9%	£2397-19-2	1524.1%
Sandwich	£131-16-2	£89-11-1	£149-14-5	£283-14-4	6.2%	£526-14-9	633.1%
Margate	£135-8-9	£142-2-9	£194-4s			£1553-7-2	
Folkestone	£29-3-11	£30-8-9	£32-9-11	£34-11-2	18.4%	£542-4-3	1468.9%
Hythe	£25-10-6	£23-0-7	£32-14-7	£33-0-7	29.4%	£400-4-9	1111.7%
New Romney	£34-3-2	£33-11-4	£33-6s	£31-10-9	-7.7%	£247-7-1	684.5%
Ramsgate	-	-	-	-	-	£1451-16s	-
Bromley	£65-16-3	£69-15-1	£74-3-6	£97-16-9	48%	£502-15-7	413.9%
Footscray	-	-	-	-	-	£333-4-11†	-
Sevenoaks	£193-4-7	£165-8-6	£153-15-4	£159-9s	-17.5%	£926-9-2	481.3%
Tonbridge	£243-16s	£254-11-3	£184-13-10	£195-11-9	-19.8%	£1211-9-10	519.4%
Stonecrouch	£62-10-3	£51-9-9	£60-11-3	£62-15-2	0.4%	-	-
Lamberhurst	-	-	-	-	-	£851-8-7	-
Cranbrook	£62-9-4	£56-2-10	£50-6-7	£46-16-10	-25%	£202-3-1	331.6%
Tenterden	£43-11s	£38-14s	£33-8-9	£30-0-6	-31%	£333-4-6	1009.7%
Biddenden	£18-8s	£13-5-9	£11-4-3	£7-6-3	-60.3%	£25-4-9	245.1%
Totals	£3745-2-10	£3174-6-10	£3564-17-8	£3434-2-2	-8.3%	£29,632-8-6	762.9%

C. Lancashire

	1721	1731	1741	1751	% increase 1721-51	1801	% increase 1751-1801
Blackburn	-	-	-	-	-	£1688-14s	-
Bolton	-	-	-	-	-	£1476-3-4	-
Burnley	-	-	-	-	-	£580-5-3	-
Chorley	-	-	-	-	-	£516-7-10	-
Garstrang	-	-	-	-	-	£26-18-1†	-
Lancaster	£157-2-3	£137-1-7	£156-3-1	£178-9-6	13.6%	£4823-18-3	2602.8%
Liverpool	£525-14-7	£430-15s	£538-14-6	£920-10-7	75.1%	£31,093-4-9	3277.8%
Manchester	£431-15-5	£449-13-3	£537-7-6	£663-2-1	53.6%	£25,325-18-2	3719.3%
Ormskirk	£39-11-4	£33-12-8	£25-19-9	£21-18-6	-44.6%	£258-11-2	1079%
Prescot	-	-	-	-	-	£333-10-6	-
Preston	£247-4-9	£213-5-10	£209-3-9	£222-4-10	-10.1%	£2676-12-11	1104.4%
Rochdale	-	-	-	-	-	£1983-0-10	-
Warrington	£203-11-4	£172-12-4	£163-2s	£178-11-8	-12.3%	£2298-11-10	1187%
Wigan	£141-4-8	£110-11-11	£95-15-8	£71-12-11	-49.3%	£1216-12-11	1598%
Totals	£1746-4-4	£1547-12-7	£1728-5-3	£2256-10-1	29.2%	£74,298-9-10	3192.6%

D. Wiltshire

Amesbury	-	-	-	-	-	£143-5-5	-
Bradford	-	-	-	-	-	£727-3-11	-
Calne	£62-11-6	£53-4-4	£46-0-10	£38-5-4	-38.9%	£285-8-3	645.8%
Chippenham	£169-16-4	£156-5-4	£170-6-5	£143-11-1	-15.5%	£817-7-2	469.4%
Devizes	£146-13-1	£117-11-6	£143-8-3	£123-14-1	-15.6%	£919-7-5	643.2%
Hetyesbury	-	-	-	-	-	£179-2-1	-
Marlborough	£153-19-11	£133-17-1	£130-10-9	£103-12-4	-32.7%	£908-18s	777.1%
Melksham	-	-	-	-	-	£336-16-7	-
Pewsey	-	-	-	-	-	£59-3-7†	-
Ramsbury	£22-15-9	£24-13s	£22-1-9	£27-13-3	21.4%	£88-12-11†	220.5%
Salisbury	£467-3s	£436-11-1	£401-6-6	£405-7-1	-13.2%	£3049-11-2	652.3%
Trowbridge	-	-	-	-	-	£640-12-1	-
Warminster	-	-	-	-	-	£609-16-6	-
Westbury	-	-	-	-	-	£200-18-11	-
Totals	£1022-19-7	£922-2-4	£913-14-6	£842-3-2	-17.7%	£8966-14s	964.7%

E. Yorkshire

	1721	1731	1741	1751	% increase 1721-51	1801	% increase 1751-1801
Barnsley	£22-1-4	£25-5s	£34-8-4	£40-13s	84.2%	£654-2-7	1509.2%
Bawtry	£37-4s	£36-2-4	£34-16-8	£32-18-3	-11.5%	£435-18-4	1224.6%
Bedale	£100-4s	£89-1-10	£98-12-5	£98-3-1	-2%	£889-10-6	806.3%
Beverley	£75-0-6	£75-12s	£73-19-4	£86-9-8	15.3%	£1091-6-6	1161.9%
Boroughbridge	£137-12-10	£134-10-8	£127-18-4	£133-13-4	-2.9%	£950-17-10	618.9%
Bradford	-	-	-	-	-	£1528-15-7	-
Bridlington	-	-	-	-	-	£523-9-1	-
Catterick	-	-	-	-	-	£114-18-4*	-
Doncaster	£209-10-2	£201-1-11	£213-10-1	£201-4-9	-3.9%	£1901-4-10	844.8%
Ferrybridge	£1221-8-7	£1213-1s	£1273-19-3	£1420-1-11	16.3%	£2114-13-5	48.9%
Greta Bridge	£5-2-4	£2-16-10	£6-12-4	£12-11-3	145.3%	£136-3-9	984.3%
Halifax	-	-	-	-	-	£3665-17-9	-
Harrogate	-	-	-	-	-	£153-8-11†	-
Howden	-	-	-	-	-	£390-1-7	-
Huddersfield	-	-	-	-	-	£1953-19-4	-
Hull	£584-19-6	£570-17-9	£734-11-9	£984-17-11	68.4%	£12,294-10-7	1148.3%
Knaresborough	-	-	-	-	-	£191-13-9†	-
Leeds	-	-	-	-	-	£9397-18-3	-
Malton	£73-3-11	£80-18-8	£81-4-2	£86-15-4	18.5%	£1536-10-9	1671%
Market Weighton	-	-	-	-	-	£211-15-7*	-
Northallerton	£316-15-10	£301-4-3	£355-11-7	£429-2-6	35.5%	£1296-4-6	202.1%
Pocklington	-	-	-	-	-	£153-19-1	-
Richmond	£98-3-2	£90-15-8	£96-10-7	£92-13-8	-5.6%	£751-5-7	710.6%
Ripon	-	-	-	-	-	£284-15-10†	-
Rotherham	-	-	-	-	-	£987-15-6	-
Scarborough	-	-	£232-7-9	£286-7-7	-	£1701-6-3	494.1%
Settle	-	-	-	-	-	£379-19-7	-
Sheffield	£277-2-7	£276-18s	£270-4-5	£410-16-10	48.2%	£5406-7-7	1215%
Skipton	-	-	-	-	-	£661-6-6	-
Tadcaster	£59-15s	£61-16-10	£52-0-8	£52-9-1	-12.2%	£338-2-5	544.7%

Yorkshire (continued)

	1721	1731	1741	1751	% increase 1721-51	1801	% increase 1751-1801
Thirsk	£48-4s	£57-16-10	£39-9-6	£48-15-4	1.2%	£145-10s†	198.4%
Thorne	-	-	-	-	-	£597-3-5	-
Wakefield	£273-11-7	£247-4-10	£252-13-11	£337-3-6	23.2%	£3059-0-10	807.2%
Wetherby	-	-	-	-	-	£1279-19-5	-
Whitby	-	-	-	-	-	£1813-2-4	-
Yarm	-	-	-	-	-	£252-7-4	-
York	£1134-10-9	£1009-3-10	£897-12-7	£914-14-2	-19.4%	£5961-12-10	551.8%
Totals	£4674-10-1	£4474-8-3	£4876-3-8	£5669-11-2	21.3%	£65,206-16-3	1050.1%

Sources: POR Post 3/6, 3/8, 3/10, 3/12, 3/18, 3/19

Notes:
1. Figures shown are for the years ending 25 March 1721, 1731, 1741, 1751 and 5 Apr 1801
2. Amounts of gross revenue for 1721,1731,1741,1751 are for general post letters only. The figures for 1801 include bye post letters also. A substantial increase in postage rates occurred in 1784 (see p114)
3. Amounts marked thus † indicate that the total is in respect of general post letters only i.e. the office has no bye letter account. Amounts marked thus * indicate that the total is in respect of bye letters i.e. the office has no general letter account.

Appendix 2 - Highway robberies from the mails during the year 1770[1]

Date	Mail involved	Place of robbery	How conveyed	Sources
Early Feb.	Bristol mail	Turnham Green		St James's Chronicle No 1398 8-10 Feb 1770
8 Mar	Western mail	Between Exeter and Honiton		Ibid No 1411 10-13 Mar 1770; Annual Register (1770) p79
9 Mar	Chester mail	Between London and Islington		Gentleman's Magazine 1770 pp 139,343; Annual Register(1770) pp 74,84; St James's Chronicle No 1411 10-13 Mar 1770, No 1415 20-22 Mar 1770
20 July	Chichester mail	Between Newington and Clapham	Cart	Annual Register(1770) p130; St James's Chronicle No 1468 19-21 July 1770
7 Aug	Newcastle to	Gateshead Common		Gentleman's Magazine 1770 pp 389-90; Annual Register(1770) p138; St James's Chronicle No 1478 11-14 Aug 1770, No 1479 14-16 Aug 1770
19 Aug	Chester mail	Finchley Common		Annual Register(1770) p138; St James's Chronicle No 1481 17-21 Aug 1770
22 Aug	Chester mail	Foot of Highgate Hill	Cart	Gentleman's Magazine 1770 p391; St James's Chronicle No 1483 23-25 Aug 1770
26 Aug	Chester mail	Finchley Common		Annual Register(1770) p143
19 Sept	Chester mail	Finchley Common	Cart	St James's Chronicle No 1495 20-22 Sept 1770
24 Sept	Edgware mail	Paddington[3]	Cart	Ibid No 1497 25-27 Sept 1770
26 Sept	Arundel to Steyning		Postboy	Ibid No 1512 30 Oct 1770; Bod Mss DD (Bucks) B2/1/23a

There are suggestions of other robberies in the Annual Register, for instance at the Salisbury Assizes (Lent circuit) John Franklin appeared accused of robbing the mail between Marlborough and Chippenham (p96) and on 1 August John Stratton was hung at Tyburn for robbery of the mail by a ruse (p134).

Notes:

1. This listing may not be complete as the sources used are more likely to reflect occurences near to London and less likely those in the provinces.

2. Mail stopped and the postboy robbed but the mails not violated.

3. Attempt foiled by the arrival of an armed horse guard.

Appendix 3 - Estimates of the amounts of revenue that would have resulted if franked mail had been charged with postage.

Year ending	Value of postage: State corresponence	Members of Parliament's correspondence	Newspapers	Total	Revenue (gross) yr ending 25 Mar	Percentage of mail carried free	Sources
25 Mar 1715				£23,600[1]			1
1717	£8,270	£17,470		£25,740[1]			2
1730				£44,800	£171,283	20.7%	1
1735				£49,700	£182,171	21.4%	1
1740				£66,700	£194,197	25.6%	1
1745				£53,900	£194,607	21.7%	1
1750				£87,600	£207,490	29.7%	1
					Yr ending 5 Apr		
1755				£97,700	£210,663	31.7%	1
1760				£143,700	£230,146	38.4%	1
1765		£34,735[2]		£150,513	£262,496	36.4%	3
1770		£59,413		£201,019	£285,050	41.4%	3
1775		£64,919		£234,960	£391,943	37.5%	3
1777		£83,790[2]		£291,868	£329,921	46.9%	3
1779		£93,883[2]			£372,817		3
1784 to 5 Apr	£12,310	£133,122	£182,007	£327,439	£420,101	43.8%	4
1785	£11,306	£75,085	£201,210	£287,591	£463,753	38.2%	4
1788	£16,746	£76,679	£216,608	£310,033	£509,131	37.8%	4
1810		£166,000		£458,324	£1,855,146	19.8%	5
1815		£254,917		£631,333	£2,372,429	21%	5
1820		£250,249		£580,809	£2,191,562	20.9%	5
1825		£264,031		£765,931	£2,255,238	25.4%	5
1830		£256,514		£774,922	£2,265,481	25.5%	5
1835		£289,301		£813,796	£2,319,979	26%	5
1837		£271,431		£1,064,874	£2,461,806	30.2%	5

Notes:
1. excluding newspapers
2. letters passing through London only

Sources:
1. JHC Vol XXIX 3 Nov 1761-30 Oct 1764 p 999
2. Cal Tr Papers 1714-19 p287
3. POR Post 1/11/52-54
4. BRL B383 Acc No 32:1872 p77
5. BPP 1837-38(658) XX Pt II 539 Appendix E No 12 p109

Appendix 4 - Mail-coach services operating in the United Kingdom 1784-1840

A. England and Wales - coaches operating from London

Route	Distance[1]	Date Established	Date Terminated[2]	Remarks	Main sources used
1. London to Bath via Devizes	111	30 Aug 1785	1839	Patent mail-coach. Initially operated as a London to Bristol service.	The London Gazette No 12678 30 Aug-3 Sept 1785; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
2. London to Birmingham via Stoney Stratford	110	22 Aug 1785 c1795	c1791 c1828	Initially a patent mail-coach but later operated as an auxillary mail. From c1791 a branch coach connecting with the London coach at Coventry served Birmingham but this was discontinued c1795 when the direct coach was restarted.	The London Gazette No 12665 16-19 July 1785; Cary's New Itinerary (11th edn 1828)
3. London to Birmingham via Oxford[3]	119	c1812	c1838	Patent mail-coach. Routed initially via Stratford but c1819 changed to Warwick	POR Post 35/9/273; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
4. London to Birmingham (day mail)	110	4 Sept 1837	1838	Stage-coach used to convey mails	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327; 1841(381) XXVI 372
5. London to Birmingham (Carlisle mail)	110	1838	1838	Connected with Grand Junction Railway train at Birmingham	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

6. London to Brighton	55	21 May 1810 c1826	c1815	Initially a patent mail-coach. On its revival a pair horse coach. See also Croydon to Brighton and London to Steyning services	The Star 4 Apr 1810; Cary's New Itinerary (6th edn 1815, 10th edn 1826); BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
7. London to Brighton (day mail)	55	23 July 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
8. London to Bristol via Chippenham	122	2 Aug 1784	1839	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814
9. London to Carlisle via Manchester	306	10 Oct 1785	1840	Patent mail-coach. Initially established on 25 July 1785 as a London to Manchester via Derby service	Ibid.; The London Gazette No 12665 16-19 July 1785; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
10. London to Carmarthen[4]	216	5 Apr 1797		Patent mail-coach. Extension of the London to Gloucester service. Connections at Carmarthen for Milford Haven	POR Post 42/86/8; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
11. London to Chester	190	c1789	5 July 1835	Patent mail-coach	POR 10A3; Post 97/4; Cary's New Itinerary (4th edn 1810); POR Post 42/136/46
12. London to Chichester	63	5 Aug 1808	1811	Continued briefly after 1811 from Godalming to Chichester	POR Post 42/100/254
13. London to Cirencester via Abingdon	89	1791	1792	Only operated for three months	POR Post 96/21/37
14. London to Derby	127	July 1837	1840	Patent mail-coach Curtailment of the London to Manchester service	POR Post 10/76; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

15. London to Devonport	219	5 Sept 1827		The "Quicksilver". Originally ran via Shaftesbury and Yeovil but from 1837 routed via Amesbury and Ilminster	Cary's New Itinerary (11th edn 1828); POR Post 1/52/319; Post 42/116/630
16. London to Dover	73	31 Oct 1785		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
17. London to Dover (foreign)	73	10 Nov 1792 1814	1795	Operated in connection with the Post Office packets sailing for the continent. Only operated on those days that the packets were scheduled to sail	POR Post 6/3; Post 42/133/357; Cary's New Itinerary (6th edn 1815); BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
18. London to Dover (day mail)	73	26 Aug 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
19. London to Edinburgh via York	397	27 Nov 1786		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
20. London to Edinburgh	392	5 May 1825	5 May 1827	Accelerated service avoiding York	The London Gazette No 18135 7 May 1825; POR Post 42/115/597
21. London to Exeter via Bath	187	7 Nov 1785	1838	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1841(381) XXXVI 372
22. London to Exeter via Blandford	172	24 Oct 1785	1836	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/135/491
23. London to Exeter via Yeovil	168	c1827	20 Feb 1838	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 35/24/542; Post 42/116/518; Post 42/138/387

24. London to Exeter (foreign)	172	1 June 1793	c1814	Operated once or twice a week in connection with foreign mails from Falmouth	POR Post 10/24/73; Post 30/E474K/1814
25. London to Exeter (Royal Auxiliary)	168	c1812	c1824	Stage-coach conveying mails	POR Post 42/105/344; Cary's New Itinerary (5th edn 1812, 8th edn 1819)
26. London to Exeter via Amesbury	164	1837	1838	An accelerated route by-passing Salisbury and by connection at Exeter providing a through route to Falmouth	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 (distribution map)
27. London to Glasgow via Ferrybridge	405	10 Oct 1785	5 Apr 1839	Patent mail-coach. Commencement date refers to London-Ferrybridge section. Extended to Glasgow 1788.	POR Post 1/49/331; Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 97/4
28. London to Gloucester	111	22 Aug 1785	1787	1794-97 a mail-coach operated from Oxford to Gloucester. For services on this road after 5 Apr 1797 see London to Carmarthen service	POR Post 30/E474k/1814; The London Gazette No 12675 20-23 Aug 1785; Edmund Vale, Mail Coach Men of the Eighteenth Century(1960) pp 27,255
29. London to Halifax	197	1837	1839		BPP 1837-38(278) XX Part I 1 p194; 1841(381) XXXVI 372
30. London to Harwich (foreign)	71	1794	1829	Auxiliary mail carrying foreign mails twice a week	POR Post 6/22; Post 96/21/1; Vale op cit pp 80, 98; B. Critchett, A New Guide to Stage Coaches, Waggons, Carts, Vessels etc (28th edn 1830)

31. London to Hastings	68	5 June 1811 1821	1812	Pair horse coach. Service extended to St. Leonards in 1836	POR Post 42/102/146; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89
32. London to Holyhead via Chester	274	10 Oct 1785	5 Apr 1828	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/118/168
33. London to Holyhead via Oxford and Shrewsbury	268	5 Oct 1808	1816	Extension of the London to Shrewsbury service	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/100/166
34. London to Holyhead via Coventry and Shrewsbury	261	1816	1838		POR Post 1/27/330; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
35. London to Hull	170	5 Apr 1801		Operated to Barton on the Lincolnshire shore opposite Hull. From 6 Apr 1836 terminated at New Holland instead of Barton	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/137/273; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
36. London to Kings Lynn	97	c1809 July 1835	Not known	c1809 a short-lived 4 day service. From c1835-38 operated with a patent mail-coach	POR Post 42/89/619; BPP 1837-38(278) XX part I 1 p194; 1841(381) XXVI 372
37. London to Leeds	196	25 July 1785		Patent mail-coach. Between July 1788 and Jan 1789 only operated as far as Sheffield	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 97/7/173; The London Gazette No 12665 16-19 July 1785; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372; Tom Bradley, The Old Coaching Days in Yorkshire(Leeds 1889) p222

38. London to Lincoln	133	1792	c1793		POR Post 42/59/34; Post 42/35/58; Post 42/62/10
39. London to Liverpool via Chester	205	5 July 1835	5 Apr 1838	Extension of the London to Chester service to Woodside Ferry (for Liverpool). An earlier service on this route was provided by the London to Holyhead via Chester and the Chester to Liverpool routes.	POR Post 35/26/52; BPP 1835(401) XLVIII 497
40. London to Liverpool via Lichfield	203	25 July 1785	1838	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; The London Gazette No 12665 16-19 July 1785; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
41. London to Louth	148	Mar 1818		Patent mail-coach. For an earlier service on part of this route see Stilton to Boston	POR Post 42/105/226; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
42. London to Norwich via Ipswich	113	25 Mar 1785		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
43. London to Norwich via Newmarket	118	25 Mar 1785 c1797	Aug 1785	Patent mail-coach. See London to Yarmouth for the period c1788-1797	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 97/4/585; The London Gazette No 12670 2-6 Aug 1785; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98; 1841(381) XXVI 372
44. London to Poole	113	8 Aug 1785	July 1829	Patent mail-coach. Service extended to Wareham Mar-Dec 1824.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/110/400; Post 42/111/504; Post 42/120/579

45. London to Portsmouth	74	8 Aug 1785		Patent mail-coach. Not operating in 1836.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
46. London to Shrewsbury via Oxford	160	5 Sept 1785	5 Sept 1808	Patent mail-coach. Extended to Holyhead in Sept 1808	The London Gazette No 12679 3-6 Sept 1785; POR Post 30/E474K/1814
47. London to Southampton	80	July 1829	1838	Patent mail-coach. A contraction of the London to Poole service.	POR Post 42/120/579; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
48. London to Steyning	71	April 1791	c1797	May initially have operated to Brighton only.	BCL B383 Acc No 32:1874 p106; C.A. Blew, Brighton and its Coaches(1894) pp 42-43; Vale op cit p260
49. London to Stroud	105	12 Sept 1785 c1810 Sept 1827	Not known c1811 1839	Patent mail-coach. The 1785 service was short-lived.	Morning Herald No 1529 12 Sept 1785; The London Gazette No 12693 22-25 Oct 1785, No 12694 25-29 Oct 1785; POR Post 42/103/31; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707 p28; 1841(381) XXVI 372; Cary's New Itinerary (4th edn 1810)
50. London to Windsor	22	Oct 1785	1786?		PRO 30/8/232/130-31; The London Gazette No 12691 15-18 Oct 1785
51. London to Wisbeach	94	c1792	1816	In 1809 only operating three days a week Cambridge to Wisbeach. In the period 1812-14 operating Ware to Wisbeach only.	The Oracle 14 Aug 1792; POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 35/11/106; Post 42/100/342

52. London to Worcester	114	30 Aug 1785		Patent mail-coach	The London Gazette No No 12678 30 Aug-3 Sept 1785; POR Post 30/E474K/ 1814; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
53. London to Yarmouth via Newmarket	135	Aug 1785	c1797	Extension of the London to Norwich via Newmarket service.	The London Gazette No 12670 2-6 Aug 1785; POR Post 97/4/585; BPP 1807 (31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98
54. London to Yarmouth via Ipswich (foreign)	123	c1795	c1830	Stage-coach conveying mails. In 1797 was only taking mails twice weekly.	BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 29 p95; Critchett op cit (28th edn 1830)
Additionally the following mail-coaches were operated in connection with the visits of George III to Cheltenham and Weymouth					
A. London to Cheltenham	98	1786	1789		POR Post 96/22/69; Anon., Debates in Both Houses of Parliament in the Months of May and June 1808 Relative to the Agreement Made by Government with Mr Palmer (1809) pp 14-15
B. London to Weymouth	128	1792	1797		POR Post 6/3; Vale op cit p249
C. Egham to Windsor	6	1795	1796	Connecting coach	POR Post 10/26/47, Post 10/26/206, Post 10/27/74

Notes

1. Distances are given in English statute miles.

2. If no date of termination is indicated the service was still operating on 31 December 1840.

3. Cary's New Itinerary (8th edn 1819 and 9th edn 1821) list a London to Kidderminster and Birmingham mail-coach via Stratford-upon-Avon and Bromsgrove. No reference to the service can be traced from other sources.

4. In The London Gazette No 12686 27 Sept-1 Oct 1785 the Post Office advertised two new mail-coaches, one to Swansea via Gloucester and Chepstow and the other to Hubberstone via Gloucester, Hereford and Brecon. There is no other evidence for these services and if they started operation they must have been short-lived.

B. England and Wales - provincial and cross mail-coaches

Route	Distance[1]	Date Established	Date Terminated[2]	Remarks	Main sources used
1. Abergavenny to Merthyr Tydfil	20	c1835		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
2. Alton to Gosport	31	6 Mar 1803	1813	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/103/157
3. Ashburton to Kingsbridge via Totness	21	Aug 1836	1840	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/138/134; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
4. Ashby-de-la-Zouche to Burton-on-Trent	9	1837	1840	Pair horse coach	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
5. Banbury to Wolverton	27	Sept 1838		Pair horse coach. Connected with London & Birmingham Railway trains at Wolverton.	POR Post 35/28/30
6. Barnstaple to Ilfracombe	11	1835		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
7. Bangor to Pwllehli	30	c1823		Pair horse coach	POR Post 6/20; Post 42/110/218; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
8. Basingstoke to Devonport	173	4 Dec 1839		Patent mail-coach. Operated in connection with the London & Southampton Railway trains	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

9. Basingstoke to Exeter via Yeovil	123	4 Dec 1839		Patent mail-coach. Operated in connection with the London & Southampton Railway trains	Ibid., BPP 1843(602) LII 327
10. Basingstoke to Exeter via Blandford	128	4 Dec 1839		Patent mail-coach. Operated in connection with the London & Southampton Railway trains.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
11. Basingstoke to Southampton	29	c1807 c1813	5 Aug 1812 1815	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 35/9/237; 10A6
12. Basingstoke to Winchester	17	c1815	c1834	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR 10A16; Post 42/126/515
13. Bath to Birmingham	92	19 Aug 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LII 327
14. Bath to Devonport	134	1837	1838	Patent mail-coach	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p227; 1841(381) XXVI 372
15. Begelly to Haverfordwest	15	1839		Pair horse coach. Extension of the Cold Blow to Haverfordwest service	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
16. Bewdley to Ludlow	21	1839	1840	Pair horse coach.	Ibid.
17. Birmingham to Dudley	10	5 Apr 1820	1822	For extensions of this route see Birmingham to Stourport and Birmingham to Stourbridge services.	POR Post 42/106/381; Post 42/108/43

18. Birmingham to Holyhead	151	1838		Patent mail-coach. Operated in connection with the London & Birmingham Railway trains.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
19. Birmingham to Lichfield	16	Oct 1796	c1824		POR Post 10/27/199; Post 10/27/245, Post 10/27/247
20. Birmingham to Liverpool	99	c1828	1837	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 35/16/360; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
21. Birmingham to Manchester	79	10 Oct 1800	c1828	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 35/16/2; Post 42/91/42
22. Birmingham to Newtown	75	c1823	still operating in 1826		POR 10A16; Cary's New Itinerary (10th edn 1826)
23. Birmingham to Sheffield	76	5 Apr 1801	17 June 1840	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 10/124; Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/91/188; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
24. Birmingham to Shrewsbury via Ironbridge	45	1835	5 Apr 1838	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 35/24/341; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841 (381) XXVI 372
25. Birmingham to Stamford	91	5 Apr 1825	June 1835	Extension of the Leicester to Stamford service	POR Post 42/112/109; Cary's New Itinerary (10th edn 1826)
26. Birmingham to Stourbridge	22	Apr 1820	c1835		POR Post 42/106/381; Cary's New Itinerary (10th edn 1826)

27. Birmingham to Stourport	29	c1835	1840	Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
28. Birmingham to Tamworth	15	c1835	1838	Pair horse coach.	Ibid.
29. Birmingham to Walsall	9	19 Oct 1796	March 1837	In 1796 a diligence worked twice a day. From 1835-37 a pair horse coach.	POR Post 10/27/231; Post 10/72
30. Birmingham to Worcester	26	c1824 Nov 1834	Not known 1840	Pair horse coach.	POR 10A16; Post 42/134/207; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
31. Birmingham to Yarmouth	200	June 1835		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 42/136/43; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
32. Bolton to Blackburn	13	c1837	1839	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p228; 1841(381) XXVI 372
33. Boston to New Holland	69	5 May 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails. Mails appear to have been carried earlier than May 1838 but the coach was then "not under the superintendance of the Mail Coach Department."	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LII 327
34. Bradford to Halifax	8	April 1834	Not known		POR Post 42/132/575
35. Bridgnorth to Wolverton	93	Nov 1838		Pair horse coach. Operated in connection with the London & Birmingham Railway trains.	POR Post 35/26/176

36. Bridport to Taunton	33	c1823		Pair horse coach.	POR 10A16; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
37. Brigg to New Holland	12	Mar 1834	5 Apr 1835	Experimental service making connection with the London to Hull via Barton service prior to the transfer of the coach to the New Holland ferry.	POR Post 42/132/355
38. Brighton to Chichester	34	25 Aug 1806	1821		POR Post 42/98/200; Brighton Gazette No 19 28 June 1821
39. Brighton to Gloucester	155	1836	Nov 1837	Replaced by the Bristol to Brighton service.	BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89; POR Post 35/24/19
40. Brighton to Lewes	8	19 Nov 1838		Pair horse stage-coach conveying the mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LII 327
41. Brighton to Worthing	12	24 Sept 1838		Pair horse stage-coach conveying the mails	Ibid.
42. Bristol to Barnstaple	93	1835	1836	Extended to Bideford in 1836.	BPP 1836(50) XXVIII 100 Appendix 1 p3; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89
43. Bristol to Bath via Bitton	13	c1820		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/118/362; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
44. Bristol to Bath via Keynsham	14	May 1828	1837	Pair horse coach	Ibid.

45. Bristol to Bideford	102	1836	1839	Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89; 1841(381) XXVI 372
46. Bristol to Birmingham	88	1789		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 1/14/211; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
47. Bristol to Brighton	138	Nov 1837	Apr 1838	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 1/47/331; Post 35/24/19
48. Bristol to Exeter	75	2 Oct 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LII 327
49. Bristol to Hereford	48	1839		Four horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
50. Bristol to Liverpool via Birkenhead	159	Sept 1831	1836	Patent mail-coach. From 1837 route shortened to terminate at Shrewsbury.	POR Post 42/126/380; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p42
51. Bristol to Manchester	169	5 Apr 1835	1837	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 42/135/295; BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 p3; 1841(381) XXVI 372
52. Bristol to Milford Haven	158	24 Oct 1785		The departure point for the Irish packets was until c1791 Hubberstone. It was then changed to Milford Haven and was changed again in August 1836 to Hobbs Point. This coach connected with the London to Bristol service at Bristol and the London to Carmarthen service at Carmarthen.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 35/21/476; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372

53. Bristol to Oxford via Bath	82	1789 1792	4 Apr 1791 1827	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 1/14/211; Post 42/59/29; Post 42/116/632; Post 96/21/37
54. Bristol to Portsmouth	99	5 Apr 1785 Sept 1808	5 July 1790	In 1789 this service was operating to Chichester (116 miles).	POR Post 1/14/211; Post 42/100/290; Post 96/21/37; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 70 p72; 1841 (381) XXVI 372
55. Bristol to Shrewsbury	105	1837	1838	Patent mail-coach. A reduction of the Bristol to Liverpool service.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p227; 1841(381) XXVI 372
56. Bristol to Southampton	74	1838	1839	Four horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
57. Bristol to Stroud	39	6 Apr 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
58. Bristol to Taunton	44	Sept 1827	c1835		POR Post 42/116/630
59. Bromley to Farnborough	5	c1813	c1817	Stage-coach conveying mails	POR 10A11; Post 42/104/446
60. Brynmaur to Newport	22	23 Nov 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
61. Bury St Edmunds to Yarmouth	57	July 1828	Nov 1830		POR Post 42/118/594; Post 42/124/339
62. Cambridge to Bury St Edmunds	27	Apr 1796	c1797		POR Post 10/26/270; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98

63. Cambridge to Holbeach	57	1836			BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89; 1841(381) XXVI 372
64. Cambridge to Huntingdon	16	May 1810 (also operating 1823)	1812		POR 10A12, 10A16; Post 42/101/453
65. Cambridge to Wisbeach	44	1816	5 Apr 1822		POR Post 42/108/304
66. Canterbury to Deal	18	5 Apr 1823	c1838	Pair horse coach. Authority was given in Sept 1792 for a mail-coach via Wingham and Sandwich to Deal but no evidence of this service operating exists.	POR Post 42/35/109, Post 42/109/280; BPP 1837-38 (658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p 228
67. Canterbury to Margate	18	1 July 1792	1834	Operated only during the summer months.	POR Post 6/3; Post 42/133/534
68. Canterbury to Ramsgate	18	1807	1834	Operated only during the summer months.	POR Post 42/98/433, Post 42/133/534
69. Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil	25	c1835		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
70. Carlisle to Dumfries	34	c1791 Not known 1835	10 July 1793 10 Oct 1799 Apr 1839	Replaced by the Glasgow to Port Patrick service 10 July 1793.	POR 2A3A; Post 1/48/176; Post 10/24/99; BPP 1835 (542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 p3; W.A.J. Prevost, "Moffat and Beattock Hlln, two mail-coach stages", Transactions of the Dumfrieshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society 3rd series Vol 51(1975) p80

71. Carlisle to Edinburgh	94	14 Aug 1807			POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
72. Carlisle to Edinburgh (second service)	94	25 July 1837			POR Post 10/139; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
73. Carlisle to Glasgow	95	1830 1837	5 Apr 1833		POR Post 42/130/6; Post 10/139; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 12 p110
74. Carlisle to Newcastle	57	14 Aug 1807	5 Apr 1836		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/137/357
75. Carlisle to Port Patrick	119	20 May 1790 1 Sept 1807	5 Apr 1795 1830	There appears to have been a short break in service 1791-92.	POR Post 10/26/132; Post 42/99/166; Post 96/21/32; BPP 1830(63) XIII Appendix 8 p94
76. Carlisle to Whitehaven	41	1839	1840	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
77. Carmarthen to Cardigan	29	1836		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89; 1841(381) XXVI 372
78. Caernarvon to Barmouth	48	1836		Pair horse coach.	Ibid
79. Chalford to Chepstow	30	Sept 1827	Feb 1829	Branch of the London to Stroud coach.	POR Post 42/119/683
80. Chalford to Wotton-Under-Edge	12	Feb 1829	1840	Pair horse coach. A reduction of the Chalford to Chepstow service.	Ibid.; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

81. Cheltenham to Aberystwyth	117	c1836		Patent mail-coach. For an earlier service on this route see Hereford to Aberystwyth.	Bates op cit p92; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
82. Cheltenham to Bath	49	1828		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/123/219; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
83. Cheltenham to Brecon via Hereford	72	1 May 1827	Oct 1828	For a later service on this route see Cheltenham to Hereford.	POR Post 42/115/543; Post 42/119/179
84. Cheltenham to Gloucester	10	24 Dec 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
85. Cheltenham to Hereford	36	Oct 1828	1836	Patent mail-coach. For an earlier service on this route see Cheltenham to Brecon.	POR Post 42/119/179; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
86. Chester to Abergele	34	Aug 1817	Mar 1821	Pair horse coach. Duplicated part of the London to Holyhead via Chester service.	POR Post 42/104/565; Post 42/107/256
87. Chester to Liverpool	16	c1807 5 Apr 1838	5 Apr 1828 1838	To Oct 1808 the crossing to Liverpool was via the Tranmere Ferry. After this date the Woodside Ferry was used. Connected with the London to Holyhead via Chester service. For later services on this road see London to Liverpool via Chester.	POR Post 42/100/266; Post 42/118/90; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
88. Chester to Manchester	38	6 Oct 1809	5 Apr 1835	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/135/295

89. Chester to Northwich	18	c1815 18 Feb 1839	c1824	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 42/104/179; BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
90. Chesterfield to Derby	24	June 1797	May 1798	Stage-coach conveying mails four times weekly.	POR Post 42/86/201; Post 42/87/281
91. Chipping Norton to Birmingham	43	c1835 1839	July 1836	Pair horse coach. In 1836-37 run as a Birmingham to Stratford service	POR Post 42/138/19; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
92. Christchurch to Dorchester	33	Sept 1816	5 Apr 1818	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/112/241
93. Colchester to Harwich	21	10 Oct 1803	5 Apr 1825	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 42/104/340; Post 42/105/114
94. Colchester to Thorpe	14	20 Feb 1810	c1814	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 35/9/237
95. Cold Blow to Haverfordwest	12	Sept 1836	1839	Pair horse coach. Route extended in 1839 to Begelley.	POR Post 35/20/492; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89; 1841 (381) XXVI 372
96. Coventry to Birmingham	20	c1791	c1795	Connected with the London coaches at Coventry. No direct London to Birmingham service between these dates.	POR 2A3A; Post 96/21/1
97. Coventry to Leicester	27	29 Oct 1810	Jan 1814	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/103/362
98. Cowes to Newport	5	28 Aug 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327

99. Crewe to Congleton	15	1838	c1839	Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part I 1 Appendix 50 p236.
100. Crewe to Macclesfield	21	1838	1838	Stage-coach conveying mails.	Ibid
101. Croydon to Brighton	43	Mar 1816	5 Apr 1817	See also London to Brighton service.	POR Post 35/11/103; Post 42/104/456
102. Darlington to Newcastle	33	23 Aug 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
103. Daventry to Leamington	19	July 1818	1819		POR Post 6/19; Post 42/105/399
104. Daventry to Warwick	21	c1807	5 July 1808		POR Post 42/100/77
105. Denbigh Hall(Bucks) to Lichfield	71	6 June 1838	Sept 1838	Stage-coach conveying mails. For a few months prior to opening throughout of the London and Birmingham Railway trains terminated at Denbigh Hall.	POR Post 35/26/538; Thomas Roscoe, The London and Birmingham Railway (1839)
106. Derby to Manchester	64	Nov 1834		Patent mail-coach. An extension to Nottingham was approved on 30 Jan 1835 but it may not have operated.	POR Post 42/134/264; Post 42/135/30; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
107. Devizes to Bath	22	Nov 1837	1838	Pair horse coach	POR Post 35/24/19; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
108. Devizes to Frome	19	Apr 1811	c1812		POR Post 42/102/168

109. Devizes to Salisbury	22	May 1828		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/118/282; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
110. Devizes to Wells	37	6 July 1836	1839	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/137/506; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
111. Devonport to Falmouth	63	c1806		Stage-coach conveying mails until c1830 then patent mail-coach.	POR 10A12; Cornish Royal Gazette 9 Jan 1830; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; Cyril Noall, A History of Cornish Mail and Stage Coaches (Truro 1963) p93
112. Devonport to Launceston	28	Aug 1836	1838	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/138/134; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
113. Doncaster to Hull	49	Mar 1837		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/139/275; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
114. Doncaster to Leeds	27	5 Apr 1839		Pair horse coach established following the withdrawl of the London to Glasgow via Ferrybridge service.	POR Post 1/49/331; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
115. Doncaster to Sheffield	18	28 Aug 1792 5 Apr 1801 5 July 1839	not known June 1827	The services operating from 1801 to 1827 and after 1839 were both stage-coaches conveying mails.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/60/18, Post 42/116/220; BPP 1843(602) LIII 327.
116. Doncaster to York	37	c1835	1836	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p42

117. Dorchester (Oxon.) to Stroud	56	June 1809	24 July 1812	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 1/24/326; Post 42/101/3
118. Dorchester (Dorset) to Weymouth	8	1791 6 July 1840	1822	The service started in 1840 was a stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 6/20; Post 96/12/17; BPP 1843 (602) LIII 327; Kent's Original Tradesman's Assistant (83rd edn 1815)
119. Dover to New Romney	22	July 1822	Aug 1823		POR Post 42/108/382, Post 42/109/587
120. Durham to Sunderland	13	11 Oct 1798 Not known but after 1823	Not known but before 1807 6 July 1829		POR Post 42/88/114, Post 42/120/548
121. Exeter to Barnstaple	40	10 Oct 1838	1839	Pair horse coach. In 1839 the service was extended to Bideford.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372 1843(602) LIII 327
122. Exeter to Bideford	49	1839		Pair horse coach. An extension of the Exeter to Barnstaple service.	Ibid.
123. Exeter to Budleigh Salterton	15	Aug 1836		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/138/134; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
124. Exeter to Dartmouth	40	March 1835		Pair horse coach. An extension of the Exeter to Torquay service.	POR Post 42/135/197; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
125. Exeter to Falmouth	98	c1788 5 July 1799	20 May 1790	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 96/4/585; Post 96/21/37; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

126. Exeter to Plymouth via Ashburton	43	c1788 5 Apr 1800	5 Apr 1790 c1830	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/117/317; Post 96/21/37; Post 97/4/585
127. Exeter to Plymouth via Totnes	48	c1814 Dec 1827	1816 c1840	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 35/11/109; Post 42/117/317; Cary's New Itinerary (6th edn 1815)
128. Exeter to Torquay	26	Sept 1827	Mar 1835	In March 1835 the service was extended to Dartmouth.	POR Post 42/116/630; Post 42/135/197
129. Exeter to Totnes	23	1840		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
130. Falmouth to Helston	12	20 Aug 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
131. Falmouth to Penzance	25	c1807	1840	From Aug 1836 a pair horse coach was used.	POR 10A6, 10A16; Post 42/104/232, Post 42/138/134; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; (John Betts), Bett's British Stage Coach, Van & Waggon Directory for 1831
132. Farnborough to Portsmouth	52	1839	1840	Service connected with trains of the London & Southampton Railway.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
133. Farnborough to Southampton	45	1839	1840	Service connected with trains of the London & Southampton Railway.	Ibid.
134. Ferrybridge to Thirsk	34	5 May 1827	Aug 1827	Auxiliary coach established on the withdrawl of the direct London to Edinburgh mail-coach.	POR Post 42/116/4, Post 42/116/493

135. Gloucester to Chepstow	28	1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
136. Gloucester to Hereford	32	5 July 1803	c1814		POR Post 30/E474K/1814
137. Godalming to Chichester	29	1811	24 July 1812	Followed the discontinuance of the London to Chichester service.	POR Post 1/24/326; BPP 1810-11(212) III 707
138. Grantham to Nottingham	24	July 1835		Pair horse coach	POR Post 42/136/191; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
139. Hartford (Cheshire) to Caernarvon	107	15 June 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails and connecting with Grand Junction Railway trains.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
140. Hartford (Cheshire) to Chester	34	1838	1839	Pair horse coach connecting with Grand Junction Railway trains.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
141. Hartford (Cheshire) to Holyhead	102	1838		Patent mail-coach connecting with Grand Junction Railway trains.	Ibid.
142. Hartley Row to Devonport	182	1838	3 Dec 1839	Connected with London & Southampton Railway trains. For an earlier service see London to Devonport and later Basingstoke to Devonport.	Ibid.
143. Hartley Row to Exeter	132	1838	3 Dec 1839	Connected with London & Southampton Railway trains. For an earlier service see London to Exeter and for a later service see Basingstoke to Exeter.	Ibid.

144. Haydon Bridge to Alston	20	20 May 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	Ibid.;1843(602) LIII 327
145. Hereford to Abergavenny	34	8 Oct 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	Ibid.
146. Hereford to Aberystwyth	117	before 1835	1836	Patent mail-coach. Replaced by the Cheltenham to Aberystwyth service.	BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 p3; 1841(381) XXVI 372
147. Hereford to Brecon	36	13 May 1807 c1814 1829 6 July 1840	c1812 1827 1830	The period of operation of this service is very fragmented (probably even more so than indicated e.g. no service shown on the distribution map of 1813 - POR 10A13). In 1840 the service was operated by a stage-coach.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 1/14/326; Post 42/117/676, Post 42/122/332; BPP 1843 (602) LIII 327
148. Hereford to Kington	24	1823	1824	In 1822 operated to Leominster.	POR Post 6/20, 6/21; 10A13
149. Hereford to Ross	14	6 Jan 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
150. Honiton to Sidmouth	9	1823	1824		POR Post 6/20, 6/21; 10A13
151. Hudersfield to Holmfirth	6	June 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
152. Hull to Beverley	9	23 Aug 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails	Ibid.

153. Hull to Hornsea	14	1839		Pair horse coach	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
154. Hull to Partington	16	May 1835		Pair horse coach	POR Post 42/135/458; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372
155. Hull to Scarborough	52	c1834 1838	1837	Patent mail-coach	BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 p3; 1841(381) XXVI 372
156. Huntingdon to Newmarket	29	c1810	Not known	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 1/24/326; Post 30/ E474K/1814
157. Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds	26	April 1805	5 Apr 1824		POR Post 42/96/486, Post 42/ 110/446
158. Ipswich to Yarmouth	54	c1792		Stage-coach operating from London but taking up mails only at Ipswich	POR 2A3A; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
159. Kendal to Whitehaven	55	6 Oct 1826 1839	Apr 1830		POR Post 42/114/528, Post 42/ 123/60; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
160. Kings Lynn to Wells	29	c1834		Patent mail-coach. Worked as a through service London to Wells via Kings Lynn from 1839.	BPP 1835(542) XLVIII 487 Appendix 1 p3; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
161. Lancaster to Clapham	20	Nov 1835	1839	Pair horse coach. Extended to Settle in 1839.	POR Post 42/136/575; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
162. Lancaster to Settle	30	1839		Extension of the Lancaster to Clapham service.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
163. Lancaster to Ulverston	26	1838		Pair horse coach	Ibid

164. Launceston to Barnstaple	28	1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
165. Leamington to Birmingham	24	Jan 1833	1838	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/129/271; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
166. Leeds to Carlisle	124	5 Apr 1839	1840	Replaced discontinued London to Glasgow service.	POR Post 1/49/331; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
167. Leeds to Darlington	58	1 Dec 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
168. Leeds to Halifax	18	Jan 1828	1839	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372; Tom Bradley, Old Coaching Ways in Yorkshire (Leeds 1889) p223
169. Leeds to Huddersfield	16	1821	Apr 1824		POR Post 6/20; Post 42/110/467; Bradley op cit p222
170. Leeds to Sheffield	33	May 1832	Not known but before c1835	Established on the discontinuance of the Manchester to Sheffield service	POR Post 42/128/227
171. Leeds to Northallerton	49	8 Nov 1786	5 Jan 1787		POR Post 96/21/69
172. Leeds to South Shields	93	Oct 1833	July 1835		POR Post 42/131/198, Post 42/136/96
173. Leicester to Ashby-de-la-Zouche	17	Feb 1825 1837	Not known 1840	Pair horse coach 1837-40. A contraction of the Leicester to Burton service.	POR Post 42/112/83; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

174. Leicester to Burton-on-Trent	26	Apr 1823 1834	Feb 1825 1836	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/109/327, Post 42/112/83; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p43
175. Leicester to Leeds	97	Not known	Apr 1807		POR Post 42/98/667
176. Leicester to Liverpool	116	c1815	Jan 1817		POR Post 35/11/45; Post 42/104/426
177. Leicester to Melton Mobray	15	10 Oct 1792	10 Oct 1793		POR Post 10/24/109; Post 42/60/3
178. Leicester to Norwich	99	June 1823	Oct 1823	Originally set up as a Leicester to Yarmouth mail-coach. The Norwich to Yarmouth section was discontinued in June 1823	POR Post 42/109/473; Post 42/110/164
179. Leicester to Sheffield	65	Mar 1836	c1837		POR Post 42/137/279
180. Leicester to Stamford	36	1823	5 Apr 1825		POR Post 42/112/109
181. Leicester to Yarmouth via Stamford	130	c1821	June 1823		POR Post 42/108/198, Post 42/109/473
182. Leominster to Presteign	14	Sept 1836	1839	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/138/190; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

183. Lichfield to Chester	65	Not known	5 July 1831		POR Post 42/126/185
184. Lichfield to Stafford	17	6 Dec 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372; 1843(602) LIII 327
185. Liverpool to Bolton	32	Dec 1814	c1823		POR Post 42/103/201, Post 42/103/563, Post 42/106/294; 10A13
186. Liverpool to Carlisle	104	19 Aug 1807	c1814		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/99/166
187. Liverpool to Holyhead via Chester and the N. Wales coast	101	5 Apr 1828	1837		POR Post 42/118/168; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
188. Liverpool to Holyhead via Llangollen	116	5 Apr 1819	1820		BPP 1819(548) V 157 p41; H.R. Davies, The Conway and the Menai Ferries (Cardiff 1942) p276
189. Liverpool to Lancaster	54	c1834	1838	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
190. Liverpool to Ormskirk	14	c1810	c1815		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/102/267
191. Liverpool to Preston	32	5 Aug 1810	1840	No references have been traced to this service between 1814 and 1822 which might suggest the possibility of a break in continuity.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/108/448; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372

192. Liverpool to Rochdale	45	Not known	5 May 1831		POR Post 42/125/517
193. Liverpool to Southport	18	1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
194. Louth to Gainsborough	36	1837		Pair horse coach. Contraction of the Louth to Sheffield service.	Ibid
195. Louth to Grimsby	16	c1834		Pair horse coach.	Ibid.; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449
196. Louth to Sheffield	69	June 1827 c1834	June 1830 1837	Service contracted to the section Louth to Gainsborough in 1837.	POR Post 42/116/220, Post 42/123/498; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p43
197. Ludlow to Aberystwyth	77	c1811	July 1812		POR Post 1/24/326
198. Ludlow to Bishops Castle	18	c1826	Mar 1828		POR Post 42/118/76
199. Manchester to Blackburn	25	1826		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 6/22; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
200 Manchester to Bolton	11	1837	1839	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1837-38(685) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p228; 1841(381) XXVI 372
201. Manchester to Buxton	18	Dec 1830	Apr 1833	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/124/379, Post 42/130/139

202. Manchester to 43 Colne via Blackburn and Burnley	Mar 1831	c1834		POR Post 42/125/260
203. Manchester to 30 Colne via Burnley	c1834	1839	Pair hore coach. Service extended to Skipton in 1839.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
204. Manchester to 15 Glossop via Ashton	8 Mar 1824 c1834	April 1824	From c1834 a pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/110/497; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
205. Manchester to 14 Glossop via Denton and Hyde	Jan 1837	c1838		POR Post 42/139/233
206. Manchester to 25 Huddersfield via Oldham and Delph	Not before 1823	5 July 1830		POR Post 42/124/85
207. Manchester to 8 Hyde	Apr 1832	5 Apr 1833	For a later service see Manchester to Glossop via Hyde	POR Post 42/128/42, Post 42/130/47
208. Manchester to 16 Knutsford	30 Nov 1825	1837	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 6/22; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
209. Manchester to 46 Leeds	c1837			POR Post 35/24/224; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372
210. Manchester to 31 Preston	19 Aug 1807	c1815		POR Post 30/474K/1814; Post 42/99/166

211. Manchester to Sheffield via Glossop	39	May 1818	May 1832		POR Post 42/103/319; Post 42/128/227
212. Manchester to Sheffield via Buxton and Bakewell	47	6 July 1808	July 1829		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/120/217
213. Manchester to Skipton	57	1839		Pair horse coach. An extension of the Manchester to Colne service.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
214. Manchester to Staleybridge	8	c1834		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
215. Manchester to York via Tadcaster	70	c1834		Patent mail-coach	Ibid.
216. Manchester to York via Wetherby	72	1831		Patent mail-coach	Ibid.
217. Newcastle to Sunderland	13	Not earlier than July 1823	July 1827		POR Post 42/116/458
218. Nettlebed to Stroud	65	c1810	Sept 1812		POR Post 35/9/230
219. Newmarket to Kings Lynn	43	not known	July 1835		POR Post 42/136/96
220. Newport to Abergavenny	22	c1834		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841 (381) XXVI 372
221. Newport to Tredegar	20	23 Nov 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327

222. Newtown to Aberystwyth	43	1839	1840	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
223. Norwich to Cromer	23	c1834		Pair horse coach.	Ibid; 1836(364) XLV 449
224. Norwich to Yarmouth	24	c1830		Pair horse coach.	Ibid.
225. Nottingham to Derby	16	5 Apr 1801	c1824		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/110/301
226. Oxford to Birmingham via Stratford	63	c1820	23 Apr 1823		POR Post 42/107/565, Post 42/109/362
227. Oxford to Cirencester	36	5 May 1840		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
228. Oxford to Gloucester	49	5 May 1794	5 Apr 1797	London to Gloucester stage-coach conveying mails only from Oxford.	POR Post 10/26/96; BPP 1807 (31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98
229. Penrith to Whitehaven	46	a service operated 2 July 1838	c1823 1839		POR Post 35/26/509; 10A13; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
230. Plymouth to Falmouth	62	1 May 1807	c1827		POR Post 30/E474K/1814
231. Plymouth to Tavistock	15	c1811	c1815		POR Post 1/24/326; Post 30/E474K/1814

232. Pontefract to Leeds	13	c1834	1839	Pair horse coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372
233. Portsmouth to Chichester	18	1788	c1828	Extended to Bognor c1825.	POR Post 97/4/585; 10A13; Cary's New Itinerary (9th edn 1821, 10th edn 1826, 11th edn 1828)
234. Portsmouth to Cosham	5	Dec 1836	1837		POR Post 42/139/54; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372
235. Preston to Carlisle	88	1839	1840		BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
236. Preston to Fleetwood	25	1839	1840	Pair horse coach	Ibid.
237. Rochdale to Bolton	13	c1834	1840	Pair horse coach.	Ibid; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449
238. Salisbury to Christchurch	27	Jan 1834	1840	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/132/50; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372
239. Salisbury to Exeter via Yeovil	88	16 Oct 1809	c1827	Patent mail-coach	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/101/129
240. Scole to Bungay	15	operating in Dec 1829			POR Post 42/122/183
241. Sheffield to Gainsborough	33	1836		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
242. Sheffield to Halifax	34	Oct 1833	1836	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/131/276; BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p43

243. Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth	73	c1807 c1813	July 1812 c1815	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR 10A6; Post 1/24/326; Post 30/E474K/1814
244. Shrewsbury to Chester via Whitchurch	41	13 Jan 1835	5 Apr 1836		POR Post 42/134/492; Post 42/137/351
245. Shrewsbury to Hereford	52	29 June 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
246. Shrewsbury to Liverpool	56	1838		Patent mail-coach. For an earlier service on this route see Chester to Liverpool.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
247. Shrewsbury to Newtown	32	1835			Ibid.; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449
248. Southampton to Brighton	63	Apr 1838		Four horse mail-coach. Replacement for the Bristol to Brighton service.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
249. Southampton to Lymington	18	1789		Connected with the London to Southampton and Poole services.	Ibid.; POR Post 1/14/211
250. Southampton to Poole	37	5 Apr 1830		Pair horse coach. For services prior to July 1829 see London to Poole service.	POR Post 42/123/93; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
251. Stafford to Chester	52	July 1831	May 1832		POR Post 42/126/185; Post 42/128/140
252. Stamford to Coltersworth	15	Mar 1828		Pair horse stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327

253. Stamford to Melton Mobray	22	July 1835	May 1836		POR Post 42/136/56, Post 42/137/470
254. Stilton to Boston	52	5 July 1807	May 1818	Stage-coach London to Boston conveying mails only from Stilton. Discontinued on the establishment of the London to Louth service.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/105/226
255. Stockbridge to Gosport	33	Sept 1811	Not known	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 42/102/312
256. Stockport to Manchester	7	Mar 1809	Not known	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 42/101/311
257. Stratford-upon-Avon to Birmingham	23	July 1836	Apr 1837	Pair horse coach. A contraction of the Chipping Norton to Birmingham service.	POR Post 10/72; Post 42/138/19
258. Stratford-upon-Avon to Coventry	28	20 Dec 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
259. Stratford-upon-Avon to Kidderminster	28	c1820	Dec 1821	Extended to Warwick in Dec 1821	POR Post 42/107/344, Post 42/108/70
260. Swansea to Llanelly	15	c1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
261. Swansea to Merthyr Tydfil	32	c1834		Pair horse coach	Ibid.; BPP 1836(364) XLV 449
262. Taunton to Barnstaple via Tiverton	51	1 Oct 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327

263. Taunton to Crewekerne	20	3 Feb 1823	1827		POR Post 6/20, Post 6/21, Post 6/22; 10A13
264. Taunton to Exeter	37	1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
265. Taunton to Minehead	25	25 Dec 1827	1840	Pair horse coach.	Ibid.; POR Post 42/117/322
266. Taunton to Sidmouth	27	Aug 1836		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/138/134; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
267. Totnes to Devonport	27	Sept 1827	before 1835		POR Post 42/116/630
268. Totnes to Kingsbridge	14	c1834	Aug 1836	Pair horse coach. Extended to Ashburton in Aug 1836.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 51 p89
269. Truro to Penzance	30	c1839		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
270. Twyford to Bath	74	1839	1840	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Great Western Railway trains from London.	Ibid
271. Twyford to Bristol	87	1839	1840	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Great Western Railway trains from London.	Ibid
272. Twyford to Cheltenham	65	1839	1840	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Great Western Railway Trains from London.	Ibid

273. Twyford to Gloucester	74	1839	1840	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Great Western Railway trains from London.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
274. Twyford to Stroud	77	1839	1840	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Great Western Railway trains from London.	Ibid
275. Wakefield to Huddersfield	14	May 1824	Not known		POR Post 42/110/467
276. Ware to Cambridge	31	1809	c1828	Stage-coach from London to Cambridge conveying mails only from Ware	POR Post 42/100/342; Cary's New Itinerary (11th edn 1828)
277. Warrington to Edinburgh via Carlisle	210	Apr 1837	1837	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Grand Junction Railway trains.	POR Post 42/139/289; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p227
278. Warrington to Glasgow via Carlisle	211	Apr 1837	1838	Patent mail-coach. Connected with Grand Junction Railway trains.	Ibid
279. Warwick to Coventry	10	29 Aug 1810 also operating in 1814	Sept 1812		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/101/580
280. Warwick to Kidderminster	37	Dec 1821	not operating July 1823		POR Post 42/108/70; 10A13
281. Welshpool to Aberystwyth	57	2 June 1839		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1843(602) LIII 327
282. Welshpool to Bishops Castle	17	not operating July 1823	5 July 1827		POR 10A16; Post 42/116/399

283. Whitmore to Market Drayton	10	1838	1838	Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 50 p236
284. Wolverhampton to Banbury	45	1838		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
285. Wolverhampton to Bridgnorth	15	1823 1838	Dec 1824	Service from 1838 operated by a pair horse coach.	POR 10A16; Post 42/111/477; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
286. Wolverhampton to Lichfield	16	Not known	July 1834	Pair horse coach.	POR Post 42/133/357
287. Woodstock to Banbury	17	c1805 20 July 1817	9 Apr 1813 c1824	From 5 Jan 1823 operated Oxford to Banbury.	POR Post 6/20; Post 42/103/114, Post 42/104/275; 10A16
288. Worcester to Hereford	32	5 Mar 1794	July 1827	Initially operated only three days a week.	POR Post 10/26/96; Post 42/116/265; BPP 1807(31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98
289. Worcester to Kington	40	Dec 1822	June 1838	Patent mail-coach. Service replaced in 1838 by one from Worcester to Leominster.	POR Post 35/26/453; Post 42/109/75
290. Worcester to Leominster	26	June 1838		Four horse coach. Contraction of the Worcester to Kington service.	BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372
291. Worcester to Ludlow	31	30 Aug 1785		Initially formed part of a through service from London via Worcester though this section was only operated three times a week until 1795 and from thence for a period four times a week.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; The London Gazette No 12678 30 Aug-3 Sept 1785; POR Post 42/69/198; BPP 1841(381) XXVI 372

292. Worcester to Upton	10	c1796	c1797		POR Post 10/27/36; BPP 1807 (31) II 101 Appendix 29 p98
293. Worksop to Sheffield	24	Mar 1812	c1814	Stage-coach conveying mails	POR Post 42/102/476, Post 42/103/228
294. York to Hull	39	23 July 1787	1840	From c1834 two services a day were operated.	POR Post 1/13/211; BPP 1836 (364) XLV 449; 1841(381) XXVI 372; Bradley op cit p222
295. York to Liverpool	107	5 Sept 1792	1831	During the 1790s regarded as part of a through route Liverpool to Hull.	POR Post 42/60/39, Post 42/105/293; 10A16; Aris's Birmingham Gazette 18 Apr 1831
296. York to Scarborough	40	28 Aug 1792		Patent mail-coach. In the 1790s operated four times a week.	POR Post 42/60/18; BPP 1841 (381) XXVI 372
297. York to South Shields	83	Dec 1808	May 1831	Extension of the York to Sunderland service	POR Post 42/100/320; Post 42/125/587
298. York to Sunderland	76	Apr 1807	Dec 1808	Service extended to South Shields in December 1808.	POR Post 42/98/666
299. York to Whitby	48	c1793	June 1828	Service operated three days weekly	POR Post 6/3; Post 42/118/531

Notes

1. Distances are given in English statute miles

2. If no date of termination is indicated the service was still operating on 31 December 1840

C. Scotland

Route	Distance[1]	Date Established	Date Terminated[2]	Remarks	Main sources used
1. Aberdeen to Ballater	42	c1835		Pair horse coach.	BPP 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p44; 1837-38 (658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
2. Aberdeen to Banff	47	March 1811 c1830	c1813 c1835	In 1811 operated by a diligence and in 1833 by a mail-coach. See also Aberdeen to Inverness via Banff service.	POR Post 35/7/198; Post 42/130/269; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1
3. Aberdeen to Fochabers	58	c1812	c1831		PRO MPB 10; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 8 p94
4. Aberdeen to Inverness via Huntly	108	1809		To 1811 no winter service operated. Worked alternately via Huntly (108 miles) and Banff (123 miles) c1813. A diligence was used on this service until c1830.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/101/211, Post 42/102/389; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
5. Aberdeen to Inverness via Banff	123	5 Apr 1811	c1830		POR Post 1/25/252; Post 30/E474K/1814.
6. Aberdeen to Peterhead	31	1823		Pair horse coach.	POR Post 1/35/144; Post 6/20; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229

7. Airdrie to Bathgate	14	c1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
8. Dalkeith to Musselborough	6	Not known	10 Oct 1812	Mail diligence	POR Post 35/9/159
9. Dingwall to Stromferry	71	1838		Stage-coach conveying mails. Probably only three days a week.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
10. Dumfries to Port Patrick	85	1830		Pair horse coach. See also Carlisle to Port Patrick service.	Ibid.; The Edinburgh Almanack (Edinburgh 1830)
11. Dundee to Kiremuir	20	Not known	Nov 1826	Mail diligence	POR Post 42/115/91
12. Dundee to Montrose	25	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
13. Dunkeld to Kenmore	24	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	Ibid
14. Edinburgh to Aberdeen	132	1 Aug 1798		Patent mail-coach	Ibid.; POR Post 42/87/599
15. Edinburgh to Coldstream	53	c1830	Not known		BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 8 p94
16. Edinburgh to Dalkeith	9	Not known c1813	Oct 1812	Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 1/24/326; BPP 1837-38 XX part II 1 Appendix D No 37 p37; The Post Office Annual Directory (Edinburgh 1820)

17. Edinburgh to Dumfries	73	1790 5 Apr 1806	May 1791	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 30//474K/1814; Post 96/21/42; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229; W.A.J. Prevost, "Moffat and Beatock Inn", Transactions of the Dumfries & Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society 3rd series Vol 51 (1975) p78
18. Edinburgh to Dunbar	29	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix D No 37 p37
19. Edinburgh to Dundee	35	1837		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 10/138; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
20. Edinburgh to Falkirk	23	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix D No 37 p37
21. Edinburgh to Glasgow via Whitburn	41	4 June 1805		Patent mail-coach. Day mail.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
22. Edinburgh to Glasgow via Kilsyth	44	16 Apr 1810		Patent mail-coach. Night mail.	Ibid
23. Edinburgh to Leith	2	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix D No 37 p37
24. Edinburgh to Musselborough	6	Not known c1813	Oct 1812 Not known		POR Post 1/24/326; Post 30/E474K/1814

25. Edinburgh to Perth	43	1837		Patent mail-coach. For an earlier service on this road see Edinburgh to Aberdeen.	POR Post 10/138; BPP 1837-38 (658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
26. Edinburgh to Port Patrick	147	c1792 1805	Not known c1813		PRO MPB10; POR 2A3A; ARB Haldane, Three Centuries of the Scottish Posts (Edinburgh 1971) p80
27. Edinburgh to North Berwick	30	1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix D No 37 p37
28. Edinburgh to Stirling	36	1 Aug 1807		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 30/E474K/1814; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
29. Fraserburgh to Burness	22	c1830			BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 8 p 94; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
30. Fraserburgh to Mintlaw	13	1823	c1829		POR Post 1/35/144; Post 6/20; BPP 1825(11) XVII 419
31. Glasgow to Ayr	35	20 May 1790	c1815		POR Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 96/21/32
32. Glasgow to Greenock	24	1785 3 May 1793 1814	Apr 1791 Sept 1813 Apr 1832	Between 1793 and c1830 two services a day were operating.	POR Post 10/24/55; Post 30/E474K/1814; Post 42/103/266; Post 42/126/560; Post 97/10/351; BPP 1830(63) XIII 1 Appendix 8 p94
33. Glasgow to Hamilton	11	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237

34. Glasgow to Long Loam	8	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
35. Glasgow to Paisley	8	1794 c1837	Not known	Stage-coach conveying mails. Service three times daily.	POR Post 96/21; BPP 1837-38 (658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
36. Glasgow to Perth	66	Jan 1823		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 42/109/139; BPP 1837 -38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
37. Glasgow to Port Patrick	94	10 July 1793 c1815 Oct 1835	Not known c1817	Service operated from 10 July 1793 by a mail diligence. In Oct 1835 a pair horse coach was being used.	POR Post 10/24/99; Post 30/ E474K/1814; Post 42/136/464; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II Appendix 45 p229
38. Glasgow to Saltcoats	36	c1837		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
39. Inverness to Fort Augustus	32	Sept 1836		A two wheeled carriage was in use in September 1836.	POR Post 1/43/144; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
40. Inverness to Tain	47	15 July 1819		Pair horse mail diligence. Part of a through route Inverness to Thurso.	POR Post 1/30/171; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
41. Newton Stewart to Stranraer	27	1836			BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p229
42. Paisley to Saltcoats	28	Apr 1807	Not known	Mail diligence.	POR Post 42/98/659

43. Perth to Inverness	117	1836		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237; Haldane op cit p100
44. Peterhead to Banff	35	Apr 1833	June 1838		POR Post 35/26/407; Post 42/130/269
45. Tain to Thurso	112	15 July 1819		Pair horse diligence. Part of a through route Inverness to Thurso.	POR Post 1/30/171; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237

Notes

1. Distances are given in English statute miles.

2. If no date of termination is indicated the service was still operating on 31 December 1840

D. Ireland

Route	Distance[1]	Date established	Date terminated[2]	Remarks	Main sources used
1. Armagh to Aughnacloy	18	March 1814	Not known	Mail diligence.	POR Post 15/156/285
2. Armagh to Newry	19	Re-established in Dec 1818			POR Post 15/157/94, Post 15/157/98
3. Ballina to Castlebar	22	c1832		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
4. Ballinasloe to Westport	79	5 Apr 1809		Patent mail-coach. Connected with the Dublin to Galway service.	POR Post 1/51/49; BPP 1818 (425) XVI 443
5. Bandon to Bantry	38	c1832			BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338
6. Belfast to Donaghadee	18	5 Sept 1810	Dec 1832	Replaced by the Belfast to Larne service.	POR Post 36/3/423; BPP 1818 (425) XVI 443; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338
7. Belfast to Enniskillen	91	6 June 1834			POR Post 1/52/272; Post 36/4/102; The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack (Dublin 1835)
8. Belfast to Larne	23	c1833			BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834) p75

9. Belfast to Londonderry	89	5 Apr 1809		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 1/51/68; Post 15/156/58
10. Carlow to Waterford	45	5 Jan 1804	5 Jan 1811	Mail diligence connecting with the Dublin to Cork via Clonmel service.	BPP 1818(425) XVI 443
11. Cork to Bantry	72	c1833		Patent mail-coach. An extension of the Cork to Skibbereen service.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834)
12. Cork to Kinsale	19	c1832		Patent mail-coach.	Ibid.; BPP 1831-32(645) XVII 397
13. Cork to Killarney	64	Aug 1810	Apr 1815	Originally a three day service but operated six days from Oct 1811. In April 1815 service extended to Tralee.	POR Post 15/156/161, Post 15/156/219, Post 15/157/14
14. Cork to Limerick	66	5 Apr 1803		Originally a three day service but converted to a six day one in April 1815	POR Post 15/157/12; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
15. Cork to Mallow	20	Operating in 1838		Stage-coach conveying mails.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 52 p237
16. Cork to Skibbereen	53	c1820	c1833	Extended to Bantry c1833.	BPP 1822(513) VI 241 Appendix pp 86-87; 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338
17. Cork to Tralee	74	Apr 1815		Patent mail-coach. An extension of the Cork to Killarney service.	POR Post 15/157/14; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230

18. Cork to Youghall	35	5 July 1809	5 July 1816		POR Post 15/156/14; BPP 1818 (425) XVI 443
19. Dublin to Athlone	78	1799	1801	See remarks regarding the Dublin to Galway service.	POR Post 15/155/86
20. Dublin to Ballinasloe	93	1796	1799	See remarks regarding the Dublin to Galway service.	Ibid
21. Dublin to Belfast (night mail)	102	5 July 1789		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 15/154/179; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
22. Dublin to Belfast (day mail)	102	Nov 1814		Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 15/156/312; Post 1/54/43
23. Dublin to Celbridge	12	c1833	c1837	Pair horse mail-coach.	BPP 1836(260) XLV 431 p4; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p44
24. Dublin to Cork via Cashel (day mail)	160	5 Feb 1812		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 1/54/43; BPP 1818 (425) XVI 443
25. Dublin to Cork via Clonmel (night mail)	169	5 July 1789		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 1/55/45; Post 15/154/158
26. Dublin to Enniskillen	102	5 Apr 1803		Patent mail-coach	BPP 1818(425) XVI 443; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230

27. Dublin to Galway	133	May 1792 10 Oct 1807	1796	Patent mail-coach. Service contracted in 1796 to Ballinasloe, in 1799 to Athlone and by 1801 only worked as far as Longford.	POR Post 1/51/49; Post 15/155/86; BPP 1818(425) XVI 443
28. Dublin to Howth	9	July 1818	22 Jan 1834	Run in connection with the Irish Sea packet services. Two services a day operating in 1832.	POR Post 15/157/117; BPP 1819(501) V 121 p41; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834) Edward Watson, The Royal Mails to Ireland(1917) pp 124-25,140
29. Dublin to Kilkenny	73	6 May 1835		Stage-coach conveying mails.	POR Post 36/6/59; BPP 1836(260) XLV 431 p4; 1837-38(145) XXXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
30. Dublin to Kingstown	7	29 Aug 1826	17 Dec 1834	Run in connection with the Irish Sea packet services. At first two and later three departures daily. Replaced by rail route.	POR Post 10/161; BPP 1831-32 (716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837-38(145)XXXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45; 1837-38 (257) XVI 341 p54; Watson op cit pp 124-25, 141
31. Dublin to Limerick	119	5 Apr 1791		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 15/154/190; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
32. Dublin to Londonderry	144	Apr 1803		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 1/51/229; Post 15/155/135
33. Dublin to Longford	74	1801	10 Oct 1807	A contraction of the Dublin to Galway route.	POR Post 15/155/86; The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack (Dublin 1801, 1805)

34. Dublin to New Ross	92	June 1837	Apr 1839	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 10/156; Post 36/9/108; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
35. Dublin to Sligo	132	Apr 1805 c1821	Jan 1809	After the failure of the contractor in 1809 replaced by the mail-coach Kinnegad to Sligo.	POR Post 15/155/189, Post 15/156/67; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack(Dublin 1825)
36. Dublin to Waterford	102	5 July 1807		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1818(425) XVI 443; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
37. Dublin to Wexford	94	5 Apr 1808		Patent mail-coach. For a period from 14 July 1807 this service operated to Wicklow.	Ibid
38. Dungannon to Coleraine	41	c1832	July 1836	Operated as part of a through route Newry to Coleraine.	POR Post 36/6/282; BPP 1831-32 (645) XVII 397 Appendix 3 p iv; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; 1837-38(145) XXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45
39. Dunmore to Waterford	12	c1832	c1837	Pair horse mail-coach.	BPP 1831-32(716) XVIII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837(70) XXXIV part I 263 Appendix 23 p44
40. Enniskillen to Ballyshannon	28	c1834		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 36/3/484; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834)

41. Galway to Tuam	21	Jan 1833		Pair horse mail-coach	POR Post 36/3/484; BPP 1836(260) XLV 431 p4; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
42. Killarney to Tralee	25	c1836		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837-38(658) part II 1 Appendix II 1 Appendix 45 p230
43. Kinnegad to Sligo	50	5 July 1809	c1821	See Dublin to Sligo service.	BPP 1818(425) XVI 443; 1822 (513) VI 241 Appendix 1 p86; 1836(364) XLV 449; 1837-38 (658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
44. Limerick to Clonmel	53	Nov 1810	c1835		POR Post 15/156/183; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834)
45. Limerick to Ennis	23	Aug 1808	c1833	Mail diligence. Discontinued on the establishment of the Limerick to Galway service.	POR Post 15/155/288; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338
46. Limerick to Galway	66	c1833		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834)
47. Limerick to Tralee	63	Aug 1808 5 Jan 1835	1833	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 15/156/250; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837-38(145) XXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
48. Limerick to Waterford	88	c1821		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 15/157/165; Post 1/51/227

49. Londonderry to Sligo	86	c1832 17 Aug 1833	Dec 1832	Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 36/6/389; Post 36/4/252; BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
50. Newry to Dungannon	33	1804		Patent mail-coach	POR Post 15/155/157; Post 1/53/138
51. Sligo to Ballina	37	c1835		Patent mail-coach.	BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230; The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack (Dublin 1835)
52. Sligo to Castlebar	59	c1832	c1835		BPP 1831-32(716) XVII 1 Appendix 18 p338; 1837-38 (145) XXV 469 Appendix B No 5 p45; The Dublin Almanac (Dublin 1834)
53. Waterford to Clonmel	34	5 Apr 1809	c1821		BPP 1818(425) XVI 443; 1822 (513) VI 241
54. Waterford to Cork	91	Aug 1814		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 15/156/300; BPP 1837-38(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
55. Waterford to Wexford	37	18 May 1835		Patent mail-coach.	POR Post 36/6/180; BPP 1836 (364) XLV 449; 1837-8(658) XX part II 1 Appendix 45 p230
56. Waterford to Youghall	62	c1833	1838		BPP 1836(260) XLV 431 p4; 1837-38(708) XX part I 517 distribution map

Notes

1. Distances are given in English statute miles.

2. If no date of termination is indicated the service waa still operating on 31 December 1840.

General Note on Appendix 4

Only sources establishing the date of commencement and termination are shown in most cases. Additional sources were used to confirm continuity of operation.

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